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# Mr. *LAW*'s Second LETTER

TO THE

Biſhop of *BANGOR*, &c.

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# Mr. *L A W*'s
# Second LETTER
TO THE
Biſhop of *B A N G O R*, &c.

# A SECOND LETTER TO THE Biſhop of *BANGOR*;

Wherein his Lordſhip's NOTIONS OF

*Benediction*, *Abſolution*, and *Church-Communion*

Are prov'd to be Deſtructive of every Inſtitution of the *Chriſtian Religion*.

To which is added, a

## POSTSCRIPT,

In Anſwer to the OBJECTIONS that have been made againſt his former Letter.

By *WILLIAM LAW*, M. A.

*LONDON:*
Printed for *W. INNYS* at the *Prince*'s *Arms* in St. *Paul*'s Church-Yard. 1717.
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My Lord,

A Juſt Concern for Truth, and the Firſt Principles of the Chriſtian Religion, was the only Motive that engag'd me in the Examination of your Lordſhip's Doctrines in a Former Letter to your Lordſhip. And the ſame Motive, I hope, will be thought a ſufficient Apology for my preſuming to give your Lordſhip the Trouble of a Second Letter.

Amongſt the Vain Contemptible Things, whereof your Lordſhip would create an Abhorrence in the Layity, are, the *Trifles* and *Niceties of Authoritative Benedictions, Abſolutions, Excommunications* *. Again, you ſay, that *to expect the Grace of God from any Hands, but his own, is to affront him* ——†. And *that all depends upon God and our ſelves; That Human Benedictions, Human Abſolutions, Human Excommunications, have nothing to do with the Favour of God* ‡.

It is evident from theſe Maxims (for your Lordſhip aſſerts them as ſuch) that whatever Inſtitutions are obſerved in any Chriſtian Society,

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* *Preſervative*, p. 98. † P. 89. ‡ P. 101.

upon this Suppoſition, that thereby Grace is conferr'd thro' *Human Hands*, or by the Miniſtry of the Clergy, ſuch Inſtitutions ought to be condemn'd, and are condemn'd by your Lordſhip, as *trifling, uſeleſs, and affronting to God.*

There is an *Inſtitution*, my Lord, in the *yet* Eſtabliſh'd Church of *England*, which we call *Confirmation* : It is founded upon the expreſs Words of Scripture, Primitive Obſervance, and the Univerſal Practice of all ſucceeding Ages in the Church. The Deſign of this Inſtitution is, that it ſhould be a Means of conferring Grace, by the Prayer and Impoſition of the *Biſhop's Hands* on thoſe who have been already Baptized. But yet againſt all this Authority, both Divine and Human, and the expreſs Order of our own Church, your Lordſhip teaches the Layity, *that all Human Benedictions are uſeleſs Niceties* ; and *that to expect God's Grace from any Hands but his own, is to affront him.*

If ſo, my Lord, what ſhall we ſay in Defence of the Apoſtles? We read (*Acts* 8. 14.) that when *Philip* the Deacon had baptiz'd the *Samaritans*, the Apoſtles ſent *Peter* and *John* to them, who having pray'd, and *laid their Hands on them, they receiv'd the Holy Ghoſt, who before was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jeſus.*

My Lord, ſeveral things are here out of Queſtion ; *Firſt*, That ſomething elſe, even in the Apoſtolical Times, was neceſſary, beſides Baptiſm,

tiſm, in order to qualifie Perſons to become compleat Members of the Body, or Partakers of the Grace of Chriſt. They had been baptiz'd, yet did not receive the Holy Ghoſt, till the Apoſtles Hands were laid upon them. *2dly*, That God's Graces are not only conferr'd by means of *Human Hands*; but of ſome particular Hands, and not others. *3dly*, That this Office was ſo ſtrictly appropriated to the Apoſtles, or Chief Governours of the Church, that it could not be perform'd by Inſpir'd Men, tho' empower'd to work Miracles, who were of an inferiour Order; as *Philip* the Deacon. *4thly*, That the Power of the Apoſtles for the Performance of this Ordinance, was intirely owing to their ſuperiour Degree in the Miniſtry; and not to any extraordinary Gifts they were endow'd with: For then *Philip* might have perform'd it; who was not wanting in thoſe Gifts, being himſelf an Evangeliſt, and Worker of Miracles: Which is a Demonſtration, that his Incapacity aroſe from his inferior Degree in the Miniſtry.

And now, my Lord, are all *Human Benedictions Niceties and Trifles?* Are the Means of God's Grace in his *own Hands alone?* Is it wicked, and *affronting to God*, to ſuppoſe the contrary? How then comes *Peter* and *John* to confer the Holy Ghoſt by the Impoſition of their Hands? How comes it, that they appropriate this Office to themſelves? Is the Diſpenſation of God's Grace in his *own Hands alone?* And yet can it be diſpens'd to us by the Miniſtry of ſome Perſons, and not by that of others?

Were the Apoſtles ſo wicked, as to diſtinguiſh themſelves by a Pretence to vain Powers, which God had reſerv'd to himſelf? And which your Lordſhip ſuppoſes from the Title of your *Preſervative*, that it is inconſiſtent with *Common Senſe*, to imagine that God would, or could have communicated to Men.

Had any of your Lordſhip's well-inſtructed Layity liv'd in the Apoſtles Days, with what Indignation muſt they have rejected this ſenſleſs Chimerical *Claim* of the Apoſtles? They muſt have ſaid, Why do you, *Peter* or *John*, pretend to this *Blaſphemous Power? Whilſt we believe the Goſpel, we cannot expect the Grace of God from any Hands but his own.* You give us the *Holy Ghoſt!* You confer the Grace of God! Is it not impious to think, that *He ſhould make our Improvement* in Grace depend upon your Miniſtry; or hang our Salvation on any *particular* Order of Clergymen? We know, that God is Juſt, and Good, and True, *and that all* depends upon Him and our ſelves, and that *Human Benedictions* are *Trifles.* Therefore whether you *Peter*, or you *Philip*, or both, or neither of you lay *your* Hands upon us, we are neither better nor worſe; but juſt in the *ſame State of Grace* as we were before.

This Repreſentation, has not one Syllable in it, but what is founded in your Lordſhip's Doctrine, and perfectly agreeable to it.

The

The late moſt Pious and Learned Biſhop *Beveridge* has theſe remarkable Words upon *Confirmation*: "How any Biſhops in our Age "dare neglect ſo conſiderable a Part of their "Office, I know not; but fear, they will have "no good Account to give of it, *when they come to ſtand before God's Tribunal* *.

But we may juſtly, and therefore I hope, with Decency, ask your Lordſhip, how you dare perform this Part of your Office? For you have condemn'd it as *Trifling* and *Wicked*; as *Trifling*, becauſe it is an *Human Benediction*; as *Wicked*, becauſe it ſuppoſes Grace confer'd by the *Hands of the Biſhop*. If therefore any baptiz'd Perſons ſhould come to your Lordſhip for Confirmation, if you are *ſincere* in what you have deliver'd, your Lordſhip ought, I humbly conceive, to make them this Declaration.

"My Friends, for the ſake of *Decency* and *Or-*
"*der*, I have taken upon me the Epiſcopal
"Character; and, according to Cuſtom, which
"has long prevail'd againſt Common Sence,
"am now to lay my Hands upon you: But, I
"beſeech you, as you have any Regard to the
"Truth of the Goſpel, or to the Honour of
"God, not to imagine, there is any Thing in
"this Action, more than an uſeleſs empty Ce-
"remony: For if you expect to have any Spi-
"ritual Advantage from *Human Benedictions*, or

* *Firſt Volume of Sermons.*

"to

" to receive Grace from the Impoſition of a Bi-
" ſhop's Hands, you affront God, and in effect,
" renounce Chriſtianity.

Pray, my Lord conſider that Paſſage in the Scripture, where the Apoſtle ſpeaks of *Leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt, and going on unto Perfection; not laying again the Foundation of Repentance from dead Works, of Faith towards God, of the Doctrine of Baptiſms, and of Laying on of Hands, and of the Reſurrection of the Dead, and of eternal Judgment,* (Heb. 6. 12.)

My Lord, here it is undeniably plain, that this Laying on of Hands, (which is with us called *Confirmation*) is ſo fundamental a Part of Chriſt's Religion, that it is called one of the Firſt Principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt; and is placed amongſt ſuch primary Truths, as the Reſurrection of the Dead, and of Eternal Judgment.

St. *Cyprian* ſpeaking of this Apoſtolical Impoſition of Hands, ſays, *The ſame is now practis'd with us; they who have been baptiz'd in the Church, are brought to the Preſidents of the Church, that by our Prayer and Impoſition of Hands, they may receive the Holy Ghoſt, and be conſummated with the Lord's Seal.*

And muſt we yet believe, that all *Human Benedictions* are Dreams, and the Impoſition of Human Hands trifling and uſeleſs; and that to expect God's Graces from them, is to affront him?

him? Tho' the Scriptures expreſsly teach us, that God confers his Grace by means of certain *particular Human Hands*, and not of others; tho' they tell us, this *Human Benediction*, this Laying on of Hands, is one of the firſt Principles of the Religion of Chriſt, and as much a Foundation Doctrine as the Reſurrection of the Dead, and Eternal Judgment; and tho' every Age ſince that of the Apoſtles, has ſtrictly obſerv'd it as ſuch, and the Authority of our own Church ſtill requires the Obſervance of it?

I come now, my Lord, to another Sacred and Divine Inſtitution of Chriſt's Church, which ſtands expos'd and condemn'd by your Lordſhip's Doctrine; and that is, the *Ordination* of the Chriſtian Clergy; where, by means of an Human Benediction, and the Impoſition of the Biſhop's Hands, the Holy Ghoſt is ſuppoſed to be confer'd on Perſons towards conſecrating them for the Work of the Miniſtry.

We find it conſtantly taught by the Scriptures, that all Eccleſiaſtical Authority, and the Graces whereby the Clergy are qualified and enabl'd to exerciſe their Functions to the Benefit of the Church, are the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Apoſtle exhorts the Elders *to take heed unto the Flock, over which the Holy Ghoſt hath made them Overſeers*, (Eph. 4. 7.) But how, my Lord, had the Holy Ghoſt made them Overſeers, but by the Laying on of the Apoſtles Hands? They were not immediately call'd by the Holy Ghoſt; but being conſecrated by *ſuch Human*

*Human Hands* as had been authorized to that purpoſe, they were as truly call'd by him, and ſanctified with Grace for that Employment, as if they had receiv'd an immediate or miraculous Commiſſion. So again, St. *Paul* puts *Timothy* in mind, *to ſtir up the Gift of God that was in him, by laying on of his Hands*, (2 Tim. 1. 6.)

And now, my Lord, if *Human Benedictions* be ſuch idle *Dreams* and *Trifles*; if it be *affronting to God*, to expect his Graces from them, or through *Human Hands*; do we not plainly want new Scriptures? Muſt we not give up the Apoſtles as Furious High-Church Prelates, who aſpir'd to preſumptuous Claims, and talk'd of conferring the Graces of God by their own Hands? Was not this Doctrine as ſtrange and unaccountable then, as at preſent? Was it not as inconſiſtent with the Attributes and Sovereignty of God at that time, to have his Graces paſs through other Hands than his own, as in any ſucceeding Age? Nay, my Lord, where ſhall we find any Fathers or Councils, in the Primitive Church, but who own'd and aſſerted theſe Powers? They that were ſo ready to part with their Lives, rather than do the leaſt Diſhonour to God, or the Chriſtian Name, yet were all guilty of *this horrid Blaſphemy*, in imagining that they were to bleſs in God's Name; and that by the Benediction and Laying on of the Biſhop's Hands, the Graces of the Holy Ghoſt could be confer'd on any Perſons.

A-

Agreeable to the Sence of Scripture and Antiquity, our Church uſes this Form of Ordination: *The Biſhop laying his Hands on the Perſon's Head, ſaith, Receive the Holy Ghoſt, for the Office and Work of a Prieſt in the Church of God, committed unto thee, by the Impoſition of our Hands.* From this Form, it is plain, *Firſt*, that our Church holds, that the Reception of the Holy Ghoſt is neceſſary to conſtitute a Perſon a Chriſtian Prieſt. 2*dly*, That the Holy Ghoſt is confer'd through *Human Hands*. 3*dly*, That it is by the Hands of a Biſhop that the Holy Ghoſt is confer'd.

If therefore your Lordſhip is right in your Doctrine, the Church of *England* is evidently moſt corrupt. For if it be diſhonourable and affronting to God, to expect his Grace from any Human Hands; it muſt of neceſſity be diſhonourable and affronting to him, for a Biſhop to pretend to confer it by his Hands. And can that Church be any ways defended, that has eſtabliſh'd ſuch an Iniquity by Law, and made the Form of it ſo neceſſary? How can your Lordſhip anſwer it to your Layity, for taking the Character or Power of a Biſhop from ſuch a Form of Words? You tell them, it is affronting to God, to expect his Grace from *Human Hands*; yet to qualifie your ſelf for a Biſhoprick, you let Human Hands be laid on you, after a manner which directly ſuppoſes you thereby receive the Holy Ghoſt! Is it wicked in them to expect it from *Human Hands*? And is it leſs ſo in

your Lordſhip, to pretend to receive it from Human Hands? He that believes, it is affronting to God, to expect his Grace from Human Hands, muſt likewiſe believe, that our Form of Ordination, which promiſes the Holy Ghoſt by the *Biſhop's Hands*, muſt be alſo affronting to God. Certainly, he cannot be ſaid to be very jealous of the Honour of God, who will ſubmit himſelf to be made a Biſhop by a Form of Words derogatory, upon his own Principles, to God's Honour.

Suppoſe your Lordſhip was to have been conſecrated to the Office of a Biſhop by theſe Words; *Take thou Power to ſuſtain all things in Being given thee by my Hands.* I ſuppoſe, your Lordſhip would think it intirely Unlawful to ſubmit to the Form of ſuch an Ordination. But, *my Lord, receive thou the Holy Ghoſt*, &c. is as impious a Form, according to your Lordſhip's Doctrine, and equally injurious to the Eternal Power and Godhead, as the other. For if the Grace of God can only be had from *his own* Hands, would it not be as innocent in the Biſhop to ſay, *Receive thou Power to ſuſtain all things in Being*, as to ſay, *Receive the Holy Ghoſt, by the Impoſition of my Hands?* And would not a Compliance with either Form be equally unlawful? Acording to your Doctrine, in each of them God's Prerogative is equally invaded; and therefore the Guilt muſt be the ſame.

It may alſo well be wonder'd, how your Lordſhip can accept of a Character, which is, or ought to be chiefly diſtinguiſh'd by the Exerciſe of that Power which you diſclaim; as in the Offices of *Confirmation* and *Ordination*. For, my Lord, where can be the Sincerity of ſaying, *Receive the Holy Ghoſt by the Impoſition of our Hands*, when you declare it affronting to God, to expect it from any Hands but his own? Suppoſe your Lordſhip had been preaching to the Layity againſt owning any Authority in the Virgin *Mary*; and yet ſhould acquieſce in the Conditions of being made a Biſhop in her Name, and by recognizing her Power: Could ſuch a Submiſſion be conſiſtent with Sincerity? Here you forbid the Layity to expect God's Grace from any Hands but his; yet not only accept of an Office, upon Suppoſition of the contrary Doctrine; but oblige your ſelf, according to the Sence of the Church wherein you are ordain'd a Biſhop, to act frequently in direct Oppoſition to your own Principles.

So that, I think, it is undeniably plain, that you have at once, my Lord, by theſe Doctrines condemn'd the Scriptures, the Apoſtles, their martyr'd Succeſſors, the Church of *England* and your own Conduct; and have hereby given us ſome reaſon (tho' I wiſh, there were no Occaſion to mention it) to ſuſpect, whether you, who allow of no other Church, but what is founded in Sincerity, are your ſelf, really a Member of any Church.

I ſhall now proceed to ſay ſomething upon the Conſecration of the Lord's Supper; which is as much expos'd as a *Trifle*, by your Lordſhip's Doctrine, as the other Inſtitutions. St. *Paul* ſays, *The Cup of Bleſſing which we bleſs, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Chriſt?* My Lord, is not this Cup ſtill to be bleſs'd? Muſt there not therefore be ſuch a thing as an *Human Benediction?* And are Human Benedictions to be all deſpis'd, though by them the Bread and Wine become Means of Grace, and are made the Spiritual Nouriſhment of our Souls? Can any one bleſs this Cup? If not, then there is a Difference between Human Benedictions: Some are authorized by God, and their Bleſſing is effectual; whilſt others, only are vain and preſumptuous. If the Prayer over the Elements, and the Conſecration, be only a Trifle and a Dream; and it be offenſive to God, to expect they are converted into Means of Grace by an Human Benediction; why then did St. *Paul* pretend to bleſs them? Why did he make it the Privilege of the Church? Or, why do we keep up the ſame Solemnity? But if it be to be bleſs'd only by God's Miniſters, then how can your Lordſhip anſwer it to God, for ridiculing and abuſing Human Benedictions; and telling the World, that a particular Order of the Clergy are not of any neceſſity, nor can be of any Advantage to them. For if the Sacrament can only be bleſs'd by God's Miniſters; then ſuch Miniſters are as neceſſary, as the Sacraments themſelves.

St.

St. *Paul* ſays, the Cup muſt be bleſs'd: If you ſay, any one may bleſs it, then, though you contemn the Benedictions of the Clergy, you allow of them by every body elſe: If every body cannot bleſs it; then, you muſt confeſs, that the Benedictions of ſome Perſons are effectual, where others are not.

My Lord, the great Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, was the Denial of his Operation in the Miniſtry of our Saviour. And how near does your Lordſhip come to it, in denying the Operation of that ſame Spirit, in the Miniſters whom Chriſt hath ſent? They are employed in the ſame Work that he was. He left his Authority with them; and promis'd, that the Holy Spirit ſhould remain with them to the End of the World; that whatſoever they ſhould bind on Earth, ſhould be bound in Heaven; and whatſoever they ſhould looſe on Earth, ſhould be looſed in Heaven; that whoſoever deſpiſes them, deſpiſes Him, and Him that ſent him. And yet your Lordſhip tells us, we need not to trouble our Heads about any particular Sort of Clergy; that all is to be tranſacted betwixt God and our ſelves; that Human Benedictions are inſignificant Trifles.

But pray, what Proof has your Lordſhip for all this? Have you any Scripture for it? Has God any where declar'd, that no Men on Earth have any Authority to bleſs in his Name? Has he any where ſaid, that it is a wicked, preſumptuous

ptuous Thing for any one to pretend to it? Has he any where told us, that it is inconſiſtent with his Honour, to beſtow his Graces by *Human Hands*? Has he any where told us, that he has no Miniſters, no Embaſſadors on Earth; but that all his Gifts and Graces are to be receiv'd immediately from his own Hands? Have you any Antiquity, Fathers or Councils on your ſide? No: The whole Tenour of Scripture, the whole Current of Tradition is againſt you. Your Novel Doctrine has only this, to recommend it to the Libertines of the Age, who univerſally give into it, that it never was the Opinion of any Church, or Church-man. It is your Lordſhip's proper Aſſertion, *That we offend God in expecting his Graces from any Hands but his own.*

Now it's ſtrange, that God ſhould be offended with his own Methods; or that your Lordſhip ſhould find us out a Way of pleaſing him, more ſuitable to his Nature and Attributes, than what he has taught us in the Scriptures. I call them his own Methods: For what elſe is the whole *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation, but a Method of God's Providence; where his Bleſſings and Judgments were diſpens'd by *Human Hands*? What is the Chriſtian Religion, but a Method of Salvation, where the chief Means of Grace are offer'd and diſpens'd by Human Hands? Let me here recommend to your Lordſhip, the excellent Words of a very Learned and Judicious Prelate on this Occaſion.

" This will have no Weight with any Rea-
" ſonable Man, againſt the Cenſures of the
" Church, or any other Ordinance of the Go-
" ſpel, that they make the Intervention of o-
" ther Men neceſſary to our Salvation; ſince
" it has always been God's ordinary Method, to
" diſpenſe his Bleſſings and Judgments by the
" Hands of Men *.

Your Lordſhip exclaims againſt your Adverſaries, as ſuch Romantick ſtrange ſort of Men, for talking of Benedictions and Abſolutions, and of the Neceſſity of receiving God's Ordinances from proper Hands: Yet, my Lord, here is an Excellent Biſhop, againſt whoſe *Learning*, *Judgment* and *Proteſtantiſm*, there can be no Objection; who ſays, if a Perſon have but the *Uſe of his Reaſon*, he will have nothing to object to any Ordinances of the Goſpel, which make the Intervention of other Men neceſſary towards the Conveyance of them; ſince that has always been God's ordinary Method. The Biſhop does not ſay, it is neceſſary, a Man ſhould be a *Great Divine* to acknowledge it; ſo he be but a *Reaſonable Man*, he will allow it. Yet your Lordſhip is ſo far from being this *Reaſonable Man*, that you think your Adverſaries void both of Reaſon and common Senſe, for teaching it. You expreſsly exclude *All* Perſons from having any thing to do with our Salvation; and ſay, it *wholly* depends upon God and our ſelves.

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* *Dr.* Potter's *Church-Government*, p. 336.

You

You tell us, that *Authoritative Benediction* is another of the Terms of Art *uſed by your Proteſtant Adverſaries; in which they claim a Right, in one Regular Succeſſion, of Bleſſing the People* *. An ingenious Author, my Lord, (in the Opinion of many, if not of moſt of your Friends) calls the *Conſecration* of the Elements *Conjuration* †; your Lordſhip calls the *Sacerdotal Benediction* a Term of Art; too plain an Intimation, tho' in more remote and ſomewhat ſofter Terms, that in the Sence of a *Certain Father* of the Church, her Clergy are little better than ſo many Jugglers.

Your Lordſhip ſays, *If they only meant hereby to declare upon what Terms God will give his Bleſſings to Chriſtians, or to expreſs their own hearty Wiſhes for them, this might be underſtood.* So it might, my Lord, very eaſily; and, I ſuppoſe, every body underſtands that they may do this, whether they be Clergy or Layity, Men or Women: For I preſume, any one may declare what he takes to be the Terms of the Goſpel, and wiſh that others may faithfully obſerve them. But I humbly preſume, my Lord, that the Good Biſhop above-mention'd, meant ſomething more than this, when he ſpake of *Ordinances, which make the Intervention of other Men* neceſſary *to our Salvation, and of God's diſpenſing his Bleſſings* in virtue of them through their Hands.

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* Page 91. † *Rights of the Chriſtian Church.*

There

There is a ſuperſtitious Cuſtom (in your Lordſhip's Account it muſt be ſo) yet remaining in moſt Places, of ſending for a Clergyman to miniſter to ſick Perſons in imminent Danger of Death: Even thoſe who have abus'd the Clergy all their Lives long, are glad to beg their Aſſiſtance when they apprehend themſelves upon the Confines of another World. There is no reaſon, my Lord, to diſlike this *Practice*, but as it ſuppoſes a Difference between the *Sacerdotal Prayers* and *Benedictions*, and thoſe of a Nurſe.

We read, my Lord, that God would not heal *Abimelech*, tho' he knew the Integrity of his Heart, till *Abraham* had prayed for him. *He is a Prophet*, ſaid God, *he ſhall pray for thee, and thou ſhalt live*, (Gen. 20. 7.)

Pray, my Lord, was not God Juſt, and Good, and True, in the Days of *Abraham*, as He is now? Yet you ſee, *Abimelech's Integrity* was not available it ſelf. He was to be pardon'd by the Prayer of *Abraham*; and his Prayer was effectual; and ſo repreſented, becauſe it was the Prayer of a *Prophet*.

Suppoſe, my Lord, that *Abimelech* had ſaid with your Lordſhip, *That it is affronting to God, that we ſhould expect his Graces from any Hands* but his own; *that all is to be tranſacted between God and our ſelves*; and ſo had rejected the Prayer of *Abraham*, as a mere Eſſay of *Prophet-Craft*; He had then acted with as much Prudence and Piety as

your Lordſhip's Layity would do, if you could perſuade them to deſpiſe *Benedictions* and *Abſolutions*, to regard no *particular ſort of Clergy*; but intirely depend upon God and themſelves, without any other Aſſiſtance whatever.

We read alſo, that *Joſhua was full of the Spirit of Wiſdom; for Moſes had laid his Hands upon him*, (Deut. 34. 9.) Was it not as abſurd, my Lord, in the Days of *Joſhua*, for *Human Hands* to *bleſs*, as it is now? Did there not then lie the ſame Objection againſt *Moſes*, that there does now againſt the Chriſtian Clergy? Had *Moſes* any more *Natural Power* to give the Spirit of Wiſdom, *&c.* by his Hands, than the Clergy have to confer Grace by theirs? They are both equally weak and inſufficient for theſe Purpoſes, of themſelves, and equally powerful when it pleaſes God to make them ſo.

Again, when *Eliphaz* and his Friends had diſpleaſed God, they were not to be reconciled to God by their own Repentance, or tranſact that Matter only between God and themſelves; but they were refer'd to apply to *Job*. *My Servant Job ſhall pray for you; for him will I accept*, (Job 42. 8.) Might not *Eliphaz* here have ſaid, ſhall I ſo far affront God, as to think I can't be bleſs'd without the Prayers of *Job*? Shall I be ſo weak or ſenſeleſs, as to imagine, my own Supplications and Repentance will not ſave me; or that I need apply to any one but God alone, to qualifie me for the Reception of his Grace?

Again,

Again, *The Lord ſpake unto Moſes, ſaying, ſpeak unto Aaron and his Sons, ſaying, on this wiſe ſhall ye bleſs the Children of Iſrael, ſaying unto them,* The Lord bleſs and keep thee, *&c. and I will bleſs them,* (Numb. 6. 22.)

Again, *The Prieſts of the Sons of Levi ſhall come near; for them hath the Lord thy God choſen to miniſter unto him, and to bleſs in the Name of the Lord,* (Deut. 21. 5.)

Now, my Lord, this is what we mean by the Authoritative Adminiſtrations of the Chriſtian Clergy; whether they be by way of Benediction, or of any other kind. We take them to be Perſons whom God has choſen to miniſter unto him, and to bleſs in his Name. We imagine, that our Saviour was a greater *Prieſt and Mediator* than *Aaron*, or any of God's former Miniſters. We are aſſur'd, that Chriſt ſent his Apoſtles, as his Father had ſent him; and that therefore they were his true Succeſſors: And ſince they did commiſſion others to ſucceed them in their Office, by the Impoſition of Hands, as *Moſes* commiſſion'd *Joſhua* to ſucceed him; the Clergy who have ſucceeded the Apoſtles, have as Divine a Call and Commiſſion to their Work, as thoſe who were call'd by our Saviour; and are as truly his Succeſſors, as the Apoſtles themſelves were.

From the Places of Scripture above mentioned, it is evident; and indeed, from the whole Tenour of Sacred Writ, that it may conſiſt with the Goodneſs and Juſtice of God to depute Men to act in his Name, and be miniſterial towards the Salvation of others; and to lay a Neceſſity upon his Creatures of qualifying themſelves for his Favour, and receiving his Graces by the Hands and Intervention of mere Men.

But, my Lord, if there be now any Set of Men upon Earth, that are more peculiarly God's Miniſters, than others; and thro' whoſe Adminiſtrations, Prayers, and Benedictions, God will accept of returning Sinners, and receive them to Grace; you have done all you can, to prejudice People againſt them: You have taught the Layity, that all is to be tranſacted between God and themſelves; and that they need not value any particular ſort of Clergy in the World.

I leave it to the Great Judge and Searcher of Hearts, to judge, from what Principles, or upon what Motives your Lordſhip has been induc'd to teach theſe things: But muſt declare, that for my own part, if I had the greateſt Hatred to Chriſtianity, I ſhould think, it could not be more expreſs'd, than by teaching what your Lordſhip has publickly taught. If I could rejoice in the Miſery and Ruin of Sinners, I ſhould think it ſufficient Matter of Triumph, to drive them from the Miniſters of God, and to put them upon inventing new Schemes of ſaving them-

themſelves, inſtead of ſubmitting to the ordinary Methods of Salvation appointed by God.

It will not follow from any thing I have ſaid, that the Layity have loſt their Chriſtian Liberty; or that no body can be ſav'd, but whom the Clergy pleaſe to ſave; that they have the arbitrary Diſpoſal of Happineſs to Mankind. Was *Abimelech*'s Happineſs in the Diſpoſition of *Abraham*, becauſe he was to be receiv'd by means of *Abraham*'s Interceſſion? Or could *Job* damn *Eliphaz*, becauſe he was to mediate for him, and procure his Reconciliation to God.

Neither, my Lord, do the *Chriſtian Clergy* pretend to this deſpotick Empire over their Flocks: They don't aſſume to themſelves a Power to damn the Innocent, or to ſave the Guilty: But they aſſert a ſober and juſt Right to reconcile Men to God; and to act in his Name, in reſtoring them to his Favour. They receiv'd their Commiſſion from thoſe whom Chriſt ſent with full Authority to ſend others, and with a Promiſe that he would be with them to the End of the World. From this they conclude, that they have his Authority; and that in conſequence of it, their Adminiſtrations are neceſſary, and effectual to the Salvation of Mankind; and that none can deſpiſe Them, but who deſpiſe Him that ſent them; and are as ſurely out of the Covenant of Grace, when they leave ſuch his Paſtors, as when they openly deſpiſe, or omit to receive his Sacraments.

And

And what is there in this Doctrine, my Lord, to terrifie the *Conſciences* of the *Laity*? What is there here, to bring the prophane Scandal of *Prieſtcraft* upon the *Clergy*? Could it be any ground of *Abimelech*'s hating *Abraham*, becauſe that *Abraham* was to reconcile him to God? Could *Eliphaz* juſtly have any Prejudice againſt *Job*, becauſe God would hear *Job*'s Interceſſion for him? Why, then, my Lord, muſt the Chriſtian Prieſthood be ſo horrid and hateful an Inſtitution, becauſe the Deſign of it is to reſtore Men to the Grace and Favour of God? Why muſt we be abus'd and inſulted, for being ſent upon the Errand of Salvation, and made Miniſters of eternal Happineſs to our Brethren? There is a Woe due to us if we preach not the Goſpel, or neglect thoſe miniſterial Offices that Chriſt has entruſted to us. We are to watch for their Souls, as thoſe who are to give an Account. Why then muſt we be treated as arrogant Prieſts, or *Popiſhly* affected, for pretending to have any thing to do in the Diſcharge of our *Miniſtry*, with the Salvation of Men? Why muſt we be reproach'd with *Blaſphemous Claims*, and *Abſurd Senſeleſs Powers*, for aſſuming to bleſs in God's Name; or thinking our Adminiſtrations more effectual, than the Office of a common *Layman*?

But farther, to what purpoſe does your Lordſhip except againſt theſe Powers in the *Clergy*? from their *common Frailties* and *Infirmities* with the reſt of Mankind? Were not *Abraham*, and *Job*, and

and the *Jewiſh* Prieſts, Men of like Paſſions with us? Did not our Saviour command the *Jews* to apply to their Prieſts, notwithſtanding their Perſonal Faults, becauſe they ſat in *Moſes's* Chair? Did not the Apoſtles aſſure their Followers, that they were Men of like Paſſions with them? But did they therefore diſclaim their Miſſion, or Apoſtolical Authority? Did they teach, that their Natural Infirmities made them leſs the Miniſters of God, or leſs neceſſary to the Salvation of Men? Their Perſonal Defects did not make them depart from the Claim of thoſe Powers they were inveſted with, or deſert their Miniſtry: But indeed, gave St. *Paul* Occaſion to ſay, *We have this Treaſure in Earthen Veſſels*, (*i.e.* this Authority committed to mere Men) *that the Excellency of it may be of God, and not of Men.* The *Apoſtle* happens to differ very much from your Lordſhip. He ſays, ſuch weak Inſtruments were made uſe of, that the Glory might redound to God? Your Lordſhip ſays, to ſuppoſe ſuch Inſtruments to be of any Benefit to us, is to leſſen the Sovereignty of God, and in conſequence, his Glory.

Your Lordſhip imagines, you have ſufficiently deſtroy'd the *Sacerdotal Powers*, by ſhewing, that the *Clergy* are only Men, and ſubject to the common Frailties of Mankind. My Lord, we own the Charge; and don't claim any *Sacerdotal Powers* from our Perſonal Abilities, or to acquire any Glory to our ſelves. But, weak as we are, we are God's Miniſters; and if we are either afraid or aſham'd of our Duty, we muſt periſh

riſh in the Guilt. But is a *Prophet* therefore proud, becauſe he inſiſts upon the Authority of his Miſſion ? Can't a Mortal be God's Meſſenger, and employ'd in his Affairs, but he muſt be inſolent and aſſuming, for having the Reſolution to own it ? If we are to be reprov'd, for pretending to be God's Miniſters, becauſe we are but Men, the Reproach will fall upon Providence ; ſince it has pleaſed God, chiefly to tranſact his Affairs with Mankind, by the Miniſtry of their Brethren.

Your Lordſhip has not One Word from Scripture againſt theſe *Sacerdotal Powers* ; no Proof, that Chriſt has not ſent Men to be effectual Adminiſtrators of his Graces : You only aſſert, that there can be no ſuch Miniſters, becauſe they are mere Men.

Now, my Lord, I muſt beg leave to ſay, that if the Natural Weakneſs of Men makes them incapable of being the Inſtruments of conveying Grace to their Brethren ; if the Clergy can't be of any Uſe or Neceſſity to their Flocks, for this Reaſon ; then it undeniably follows, that there can be no *poſitive Inſtitutions* in the Chriſtian Religion , that can procure any Spiritual Advantages to the Members of it ; then the Sacraments can be no longer any Means of Grace. For, I hope, no one thinks, that Bread and Wine have any natural Force or Efficacy, to convey Grace to the Soul. The Water in Baptiſm has the common Qualities of Water, and is deſtitute of any intrinſick Power to cleanſe the Soul, or purifie

purifie from Sin. But your Lordſhip will not ſay, becauſe it has only the common Name of Water, that therefore it cannot be a Means of Grace. Why then may not the Clergy tho' they have the common Nature of Men, be conſtituted by God, to convey his Graces, and to be miniſterial to the Salvation of their Brethren? Can God conſecrate inanimate Things to Spiritual Purpoſes, and make them the Means of Eternal Happineſs? And is Man the only Creature that he can't make ſubſervient to his Deſigns? The only *Being* who is too Weak for an Omnipotent God to render effectual towards attaining the Ends of his Grace?

Is it juſt and reaſonable, to reject and deſpiſe the *Miniſtry* and *Benedictions* of Men, becauſe they are Men like our ſelves? And is it not as reaſonable, to deſpiſe the ſprinkling of Water, a Creature below us, a ſenſeleſs and inanimate Creature?

Your Lordſhip therefore, muſt either find us ſome other Reaſon for rejecting the Neceſſity of *Human Adminiſtrations*, than becauſe they are *Human*; or elſe give up the Sacraments, and *all* Poſitive Inſtitutions along with them.

Surely, your Lordſhip muſt have a mighty Opinion of *Naaman* the *Syrian*; who, when the Prophet bid him go waſh in *Jordan* ſeven times, to the end he might be clean from his Leproſie, very *wiſely* remonſtrated, *Are not* Abana *and* Pharpar, *Rivers of* Damaſcus, *better than all the Waters of* Iſrael?

This, my Lord, diſcover'd *Naaman's* great *Liberty* of Mind; and 'tis much this has not been produc'd before, as an Argument of his being a *Free-Thinker*. He took the Water of *Jordan* to be *only Water*; as your Lordſhip juſtly obſerves a Clergyman to be *only* a Man: And if you had been with him, you could have inform'd him, that the waſhing *ſeven times* was a mere *Nicety* and *Trifle* of the Prophet; and that ſince it is God alone who can work *miraculous Cures*, we ought not to think, that they depend upon any external Means, or any ſtated Number of repeating them.

This, my Lord, is the true Scope and Spirit of your Argument: If the *Syrian* was right in deſpiſing the Water of *Jordan*, becauſe it was only *Water*; your Lordſhip may be right in deſpiſing any particular Order of Clergy; becauſe they are but Men. Your Lordſhip is certainly as right, or as wrong, as he was.

And now, my Lord, let the common Sence of Mankind here judge, whether, if the Clergy are to be eſteem'd as having no Authority, becauſe they are mere Men; it does not plainly follow, that every thing elſe, every Inſtitution that has not ſome *natural* Force and Power to produce the Effects deſigned by it, is not alſo to be rejected as equally Trifling and Ineffectual.

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The Sum of the matter is this: It appears from many expreſs Facts, and indeed, from the whole Series of God's Providence, that it is not only conſiſtent with his Attributes; but alſo agreeable to his ordinary Methods of dealing with Mankind, that he ſhould ſubſtitute Men to act in his Name, and be *authoritatively* employ'd in conferring his Grace and Favours upon Mankind. It appears, that your Lordſhip's Argument againſt the Authoritative Adminiſtrations of the Chriſtian Clergy, does not only contradict thoſe Facts, and condemn the ordinary Method of God's Diſpenſations; but likewiſe proves the Sacraments, and every poſitive Inſtitution of Chriſtianity to be ineffectual, and as mere *Dreams* and *Trifles*, as the ſeveral *Offices and Orders* of the Clergy.

This, I hope, will be eſteem'd a ſufficient Confutation of your Lordſhip's Doctrine, by all who have any true Regard or Zeal for the Chriſtian Religion; and only expect to be ſav'd by the Methods of Divine Grace propos'd in the Goſpel.

I ſhall now in a Word or two ſet forth the Sacredneſs of the Eccleſiaſtical Character, as it is founded in the New Teſtament; with a particular regard to the Power of conferring Grace, and the Efficacy of Human Benedictions.

It appears therein, that all Sacerdotal Power is deriv'd from the Holy Ghoſt. Our Saviour himſelf took not the *Miniſtry* upon him, till he had this Conſecration: And during the time of his Miniſtry he was under the Guidance and Direction of the Holy Ghoſt. Thro' the Holy Spirit he gave Commandment to the Apoſtles whom he had choſen. When he ordain'd them to the Work of the Miniſtry, it was with theſe Words, *Receive the Holy Ghoſt*. Thoſe whom the Apoſtles ordain'd to the ſame Function, it was by the ſame Authority: They laid their Hands upon the Elders, exhorting them to take care of the Flock of Chriſt, over which the Holy Ghoſt had made them Overſeers.

Hereby they plainly declar'd, that however this Office was to deſcend from Man to Man through *Human Hands*, that it was the Holy Ghoſt which conſecrated them to that Employment, and gave them Authority to execute it.

From this it is alſo manifeſt, that the Prieſthood is a Grace of the Holy Ghoſt; that it is not a Function founded in the Natural or Civil Rights of Mankind; but is deriv'd from the Special Authority of the Holy Ghoſt; and is as truly a poſitive Inſtitution as the Sacraments. So that they who have no Authority to alter the Old Sacraments, and ſubſtitute New ones, have no Power to alter the Old Order of the Clergy, or introduce any other Order of them.

For

For why can we not change the Sacraments? Is it not, becauſe they are only Sacraments, and operate as they are inſtituted by the Holy Ghoſt? Becauſe they are uſeleſs ineffectual Rites without this Authority? And does not the ſame Reaſon hold as well for the Order of the Clergy? Does not the ſame Scripture tell us, they are equally inſtituted by the Holy Ghoſt, and oblige only by virtue of his Authority? How abſurd is it therefore, to pretend to aboliſh, or depart from the Settled Order of the Clergy, to make New Orders, and think any God's Miniſters, unleſs we had his Authority, and could make New Sacraments, or a New Religion?

My Lord, how comes it, that we cannot alter the Scriptures? Is it not, becauſe they are Divinely inſpir'd, and dictated by the Holy Ghoſt? And ſince it is expreſs Scripture, that the *Prieſthood* is inſtituted and authoriz'd by the ſame Holy Spirit, why is not the Holy Ghoſt as much to be regarded in one Inſtitution, as in another? Why may we not as well make a Goſpel, and ſay, it was writ by the Holy Ghoſt, as make a New Order of Clergy, and call them His; or eſteem them as having any relation to him?

From this it likewiſe appears, that there is an abſolute Neceſſity of a ſtrict Succeſſion of Authoriz'd Ordainers, from the Apoſtolical Times, in order to conſtitute a *Chriſtian Prieſt*. For ſince a Commiſſion from the Holy Ghoſt is neceſſary for the Exerciſe of this Office; no one now can re-

receive it, but from thoſe who have deriv'd their Authority in a true Succeſſion, from the Apoſtles. We could not, my Lord, call our preſent Bibles the *Word of God*, unleſs we knew the Copies from which they are taken, were taken from other true ones, till we come to the Originals themſelves. No more could we call any True Miniſters, or Authoriz'd by the Holy Ghoſt, who have not receiv'd their Commiſſion by an uninterrupted Succeſſion of Lawful Ordainers.

What an Excellent Divine would he be, who ſhould tell the World, it was not neceſſary that the ſeveral Copies and Manuſcripts, through which the Scriptures have been tranſmitted thro' different Ages and Languages, ſhould be all true ones, and none of them forg'd; that *this was a thing ſubject to ſo great Uncertainty, that God could not hang our Salvation on ſuch Niceties.* Suppoſe, for Proof of this, he ſhould appeal to the Scriptures; and ask, where any Mention is made of aſcertaining the Truth of all the Copies? Would not this be a Way of Arguing very Theological? The Application is very eaſie.

Your Lordſhip has not one Word to prove the uninterrupted Succeſſion of the Clergy a *Trifle* or *Dream*; but that it is ſubject to ſo great Uncertainty, and is never mention'd in the Scriptures. And to the Uncertainty of it, it is equally as uncertain, as whether the Scriptures be *genuine*. There is juſt the ſame ſufficient Hiſtorical Evidence for the Certainty of one, as the other. As to its not being mention'd in the Scripture,

the

the Doctrine upon which it is founded, plainly made it unneceſſary to mention it. Is it needful for the Scriptures to tell us, that if we take our Bible from any falſe Copy, that it is not the Word of God? Why then need they tell us, that if we are Ordain'd by Uſurping Falſe Pretenders to Ordination, not deriving their Authority to that end from the Apoſtles, that we are no Prieſts? Does not the thing it ſelf ſpeak as plain in one Caſe, as in the other? The Scriptures are only of uſe to us, as they are the Word of God: We cannot have this Word of God, which was written ſo many Years ago, unleſs we receive it from Authentick Copies and Manuſcripts.

The Clergy have their Commiſſion from the Holy Ghoſt: The Power of conferring this Commiſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, was left with the Apoſtles: Therefore the preſent Clergy cannot have the ſame Commiſſion, or Call, but from an Order of Men, who have ſucceſſively convey'd his Power from the Apoſtles to the preſent time. So that, my Lord, I ſhall beg leave to lay it down, as a plain, undeniable, Chriſtian Truth, that the Order of the Clergy is an Order of as neceſſary Obligation, as the Sacraments; and as unalterable as the Holy Scriptures; the ſame Holy Ghoſt being as truly the Author and Founder of the Prieſthood, as the Inſtitutor of the Sacraments, or the Inſpirer of thoſe Divine Oracles. And when your Lordſhip ſhall offer any freſh Arguments to prove, that no particular ſort of Clergy is neceſſary; that the Benedictions and Adminiſtrations of the preſent Clergy

of

of our moſt Excellent Church, are Trifling Niceties; if I cannot ſhew, that the ſame Arguments will conclude againſt the Authority of the Sacraments and the Scriptures, I faithfully promiſe your Lordſhip to become a Convert to your Doctrine.

What your Lordſhip charges upon your Adverſaries, as an Abſurd Doctrine, in pretending the Neceſſity of one regular, ſucceſſive, and particular Order of the Clergy, is a True Chriſtian Doctrine; and as certain from Scripture, as that we are to keep to the Inſtitution of particular Sacraments; or not to alter thoſe particular Scriptures, which now compoſe the Canon of the Old and New Teſtament.

By Authoritative Benediction, we do not mean any Natural or Intrinſick Authority of our own: But a Commiſſion from God, to be Effectual Adminiſtrators of his Ordnances, and to bleſs in his Name. Thus, a Perſon who is ſent from God to foretel things, of which he had before no Knowledge or Notion; or to denounce Judgments, which he has no Natural Power to execute, may be truly ſaid to be an *Authoritative Prophet*; becauſe he has the Authority of God for what he does. Thus, when the Biſhop is ſaid to confer Grace in Confirmation; this is properly an *Authoritative Benediction*; becauſe he is then as truly doing what God has commiſſion'd him to do, as when a Prophet declares upon what Errand he is ſent.

'Tis in this Sence, my Lord, that the People are ſaid to be *Authoritatively* bleſs'd by the Regular Clergy; becauſe they are *God's Clergy*, and act by his Commiſſion; becauſe by their Hands the People receive the Graces and Benefits of God's Ordinances; which they have no more Reaſon to expect from other Miniſters of their own Election, or if the Word may be us'd in an abuſive Sence, of their own *Conſecration*, than to receive Grace from Sacraments of their own Appointment. The Scriptures teach us, that the Holy Ghoſt has inſtituted an Order of Clergy: We ſay, a Prieſthood ſo authoriz'd, can no more be chang'd by us, than we can change the Scriptures, or make New Sacraments; becauſe they are all founded on the ſame Authority, without any Power of a Diſpenſation delegated to us in one Caſe more than in another. If therefore we have a mind to continue in the Covenant of Chriſt, and receive the Grace and Benefit of his Ordinances, we muſt receive them through ſuch Hands as he has authoriz'd for that Purpoſe, to the end we may be qualify'd to partake the Bleſſings of them. For as a *True* Prieſt cannot benefit us by adminiſtring a *Falſe* Sacrament; ſo a *True* Sacrament is nothing, when it is adminiſtred by a *Falſe Uncommiſſion'd Miniſter*. Beſides this Benediction which attends the Ordinances of God, when they are thus perform'd by authoriz'd Hands; there is a Benediction of Prayer, which we may juſtly think very effectual, when pronounc'd or diſpens'd by the ſame Hands.

Thus when the Biſhop or Prieſt intercedes for the Congregation, or pronounces the Apoſtolical Benediction upon them, we do not conſider this barely as an Act of Charity and Humanity, of one Chriſtian praying for another; but as the Work of a Perſon who is commiſſion'd by God to *bleſs in his Name*, and be effectually miniſterial in the Conveyance of his Graces; or as the Prayer of one who is left with us in Chriſt's ſtead, to carry on his great Deſign of ſaving us; and whoſe Benedictions are ever ratify'd in Heaven, but when we render our ſelves, in one reſpect or other, incapable of them.

Now, my Lord, they are theſe *Sacerdotal Prayers*, theſe Authoriz'd Sacraments, theſe Commiſſion'd Paſtors, whom the Holy Ghoſt has made Overſeers of the Flock of Chriſt, that your Lordſhip encourages the Layity to deſpiſe. You bid them *contemn the vain Words of Validity or Invalidity of God's Ordinances*; to *heed no particular ſort of Clergy, or the pretended Neceſſity of their Adminiſtrations.*

Your Lordſhip ſets up in this Controverſie for an Advocate for the Layity, againſt the *Arrogant Pretences*, and *Falſe Claims* of the Clergy. My Lord, we are no more contending for our ſelves in this Doctrine, than when we inſiſt upon any Article in the Creed. Neither is it any more our particular Cauſe, when we aſſert our Miſſion, than when we aſſert the Neceſſity of the Sacraments.

Who

Who is to receive the Benefit of that Commiſſion which we aſſert, but They? Who is to ſuffer, if we pretend a Falſe one, but Our ſelves? Sad Injury, indeed, offer'd to the Lavity! That we ſhould affect to be thought Miniſters of God for their ſakes! If we really are ſo, they are to receive the Benefit; if not, we are to bear the Puniſhment.

But your Lordſhip comes too late in this glorious Undertaking, to receive the Reputation of it: The Work has been already, in the Opinion of moſt People, better done to your Lordſhip's hands. The Famous Author of the *Rights of the Chriſtian Church*, has carry'd this *Chriſtian Liberty* to as great Heights as your Lordſhip. And tho' you have not one Notion, I can recollect, that has given Offence to the World, but what ſeems taken from that pernicious Book; yet your Lordſhip is not ſo juſt, as ever once to cite or mention the Author; who, if your Lordſhip's Doctrine be true, deſerves to have a Statue erected to his Honour, and receive every Mark of Eſteem which is due to the greateſt Reformer of Religion.

Did not mine own Eyes aſſure me, that he has caſt no Contempt upon the Church, no Reproach upon the Evangelical Inſtitutions, or the Sacred Function, but what has been ſeconded by your Lordſhip, I would never have plac'd your Lordſhip in the ſame View with

ſo ſcandalous a Declaimer againſt the Ordinan. nances of Chriſt. Whether I am right or not, in this Charge, I freely leave to the Judgment of thoſe to determine, who are acquainted with both your Works. Yet this Author, my Lord, has been treated by the greateſt and beſt Part of the Nation, as a Free-thinking Infidel. But for what my Lord? Not that he has declar'd againſt the Scriptures; not that he has rejected Revelation; (we are not, bleſſed be God, ſtill ſo far corrupted with the Principles of Infidelity) but becauſe he has reproach'd every particular Church, as ſuch, and deny'd all Obligation to Communion; becauſe he has expos'd Benedictions, Abſolutions and Excommunications; deny'd the Divine Right of the Clergy, and ridicul'd the pretended Sacredneſs and Neceſſity of their Adminiſtrations, as mere Niceties and Trifles, tho' commonly in more diſtant, I was going to ſay, more decent Ways: In a word, becauſe he made all Churches, all Prieſts, all Sacraments, however adminiſtred, equally valid, and deny'd any particular Method neceſſary to Salvation. Yet after all this prophane Declamation, he allows, my Lord, that *Religious Offices may be appropriated to particular Men, call'd* Clergy, *for Order ſake only; and not on the Account of any peculiar Spiritual Advantages, Powers or Privileges, which thoſe who are ſet apart for them, have from Heaven* *.

* Page 131.

A-

Agreeable to this, your Lordſhip owns, that you are not againſt the *Order*, or *Decency*, or *Subordination belonging to Chriſtian Societies* *.

But, pray, my Lord, do you mean any more by this, than the above-mention'd Author? Is it for any thing, but the ſake of a little external *Order* or *Conveniency*? Is there any Chriſtian Law that obliges to obſerve this kind of Order? Is there any real eſſential Difference between Perſons rank'd into this Order? Is it a Sin for any body, eſpecially the Civil Magiſtrate, to leave this Order, and make what other Orders he prefers to it? This your Lordſhip cannot reſolve in the Affirmative; for then you muſt allow, that ſome Communions are ſafer than others, and that ſome Clergy have more Authority than others.

Will your Lordſhip ſay, that no *particular* Order can be neceſſary; yet ſome Order neceſſary, which may be different in different Communions? This cannot hold good upon your Lordſhip's Principles: For ſince Chriſt has left no Law about any Order, no Members of any particular Communion need ſubmit to that Order; ſince it is confeſs'd by your Lordſhip, That in Religion no Laws, but thoſe of Chriſt, are of any Obligation. So that, tho' you don't diſclaim all external Order and Decency your

* *Anſwer to Dr.* Snape, *p.* 48.

ſelf,

ſelf, yet you have taught other People to do it if they pleaſe, and as much as they pleaſe.

Suppoſe, my Lord, ſome Layman, upon a Pretence of your Lordſhip's Abſence, or any other, ſhould go into the Dioceſs of *Bangor*, and there pretend to Ordain Clergymen; could your Lordſhip quote one Text of Scripture againſt him? Could you alledge any Law of Chriſt, or his Apoſtles, that he had broken? Could you prove him guilty of any Sin? No, my Lord, you would not do that; becauſe this would be acknowledging ſuch a thing as a *Sinful Ordination*; and if there be Sinful Ordinations, then there muſt be ſome *Law* concerning Ordinations: For *Sin is the Tranſgreſſion of the Law*: And if there be a Law concerning Ordinations, then we muſt keep to the Clergy *lawfully* Ordain'd; and muſt confeſs, after all your Lordſhip has ſaid, or can ſay, that ſtill ſome Communions are ſafer than others.

If you ſhould reprove ſuch a one, as an *Engliſhman*, for acting in Oppoſition to the *Engliſh* Laws of *Decency and Order*; he would anſwer, That he has nothing to do with ſuch *Trifles*; That Chriſt was ſole Lawgiver in his Kingdom; That he was content to have his Kingdom as *Orderly* and *Decent* as Chriſt had left it; and ſince he had inſtituted no Laws in that matter, it was preſuming for others to take upon them to add any thing by way of *Order* or *Decency*, by Laws of their own: That as he had as much Authority from Chriſt

Chriſt, to Ordain Clergy, as your Lordſhip; he would not depart from his Chriſtian Liberty.

If he ſhould remonſtrate to your Lordſhip in theſe, or Words to the like effect, he would only reduce your Lordſhip's own Doctrine to Practice. This, my Lord, is part of that Confuſion the Learned Dr. *Snape* has charged you with being the Author of, in the Church of God. And all Perſons, my Lord, whom you have taught not to regard any particular ſort of Clergy, muſt know (if they have the common Senſe to which you appeal) that then no Clergy are at all neceſſary; and that it's as lawful for any Man to be his own Prieſt, as to ſollicit his own Cauſe. For to ſay, that no particular ſort of Clergy are neceſſary, and yet that in general, the Clergy are neceſſary, is the ſame as to ſay, that Truth is neceſſary to be believ'd; yet the Belief of no particular Truth is neceſſary.

The next thing to be conſider'd, my Lord, is your Doctrine concerning Abſolutions. You begin thus: *The ſame you will find a ſufficient Reply to their preſumptuous Claim to an Authoritative Abſolution. An infallible Abſolution cannot belong to fallible Men. But no Abſolution can be Authoritative, which is not Infallible. Therefore no Authoritative Abſolution can belong to any Man living* *.

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* *Preſervative*, p. 92.

I muſt obſerve here, your Lordſhip does not reject this *Abſolution*, becauſe the Claim of it is not founded in Scripture; but by an Argument drawn from the nature of the Thing: Becauſe you imagine, ſuch Abſolution requires Infallibility for the Execution of it; therefore it cannot belong to Men. Should this be true, it would prove, that if our Saviour had really ſo intended, he could not have given this Power to his Miniſters. But, my Lord, who can ſee any Repugnancy in the Reaſon of the Thing it ſelf? Is it not as eaſie to conceive, that our Lord ſhould confer his Grace of Pardon by the Hands of his Miniſters, as by Means of the Sacraments? And may not ſuch Abſolution be juſtly called *Authoritative*, the Power of which is granted, and executed by his Authority?

Is it impoſſible for Men to have this Authority from God, becauſe they may miſtake in the Exerciſe of it? This Argument proves too much; and makes as ſhort work with every Inſtitution of Chriſtianity, as with this Power of Abſolution.

For if it is impoſſible, that Men ſhould have Authority from God to Abſolve in his Name, becauſe they are not Infallible; this makes them equally incapable of being entruſted with any other Means of Grace; and conſequently, ſuppoſes the whole Prieſts Office to imply a direct Impoſſibility in the very Notion of it.

Your

Your Lordſhip's Argument is this: Chriſtians have their Sins pardon'd upon certain Conditions; but Fallible Men cannot certainly know theſe Conditions; therefore Fallible Men cannot have Authority to *Abſolve*.

From hence I take occaſion to argue thus: Perſons are to be admitted to the Sacraments on certain Conditions; But Fallible Men cannot tell, whether they come qualified to receive them according to theſe Conditions; Therefore Fallible Men cannot have Authority to adminiſter the Sacraments.

2*dly*, This Argument ſubverts all Authority of the Chriſtian Religion it ſelf, and the Reaſon of every inſtituted Means of Grace. For if nothing can be Authoritative, but what a Man is infallibly aſſured of; then the Chriſtian Religion cannot be an Authoritative Method of Salvation; ſince a Man, by being a Chriſtian, does not become infallibly certain of his Salvation: Nor does Grace infallibly attend the Participation of the Sacraments. So that tho' your Lordſhip has form'd this Argument only againſt this Abſolving Power; yet it has as much Force againſt the Sacraments, and the Chriſtian Religion it ſelf. For if it be abſurd to ſuppoſe, that the Prieſt ſhould abſolve any one, becauſe he cannot be certain that he deſerves Abſolution; does it not imply the ſame Abſurdity, to ſuppoſe, that he ſhould have the Power of Adminiſtring the Sacraments, when he cannot be *infallibly*

*tain*, that thoſe who receive them, are duly qualified? If a Poſſibility of Error deſtroys the Power in one Caſe, it as certainly deſtroys it in the other. Again, if Abſolution cannot be Authoritative, unleſs it be Infallible; then, it is plain, that the Chriſtian Religion is not an Authoritative Means of Salvation; becauſe all Chriſtians are not infallibly ſav'd: Nor can the Sacraments be Authoritative Means of Grace; becauſe *all* who partake of them, do not infallibly obtain Grace.

Your Lordſhip proceeds with your Layity by way of Expoſtulation: *If they amuſe you with that Power which Chriſt left with his Apoſtles, Whoſe ſoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whoſe ſoever Sins ye retain, they are retained unto them* *.

But why *amuſe*, my Lord? Are the Texts of Holy Scripture to be treated as only Matter of *Amuſement*? Or does your Lordſhip know of any Age in the Church, when the very ſame Doctrine which we now teach, has not been taught from the ſame Texts?

Do you know any Succeſſors of the Apoſtles, that thought the Power there ſpecify'd, did not belong them? But however, your Lordſhip has taught your Layity to believe what we argue from this Text, all Amuſement; and told them,

* Page 93.

They

*They may ſecurely anſwer, that it is impoſſible for them to depend upon this Right as any thing certain, till they can prove to you, that every thing ſpoken to the Apoſtles, belongs to Miniſters in all Ages* †. The Security of this Anſwer, my Lord, is founded upon this Falſe Preſumption, *viz.* That the Clergy can claim no Right to the Exerciſe of any Part of their Office, *as Succeſſors of the Apoſtles*, till they can prove, that every thing that was ſpoken to the Apoſtles, belongs to them.

This Propoſition muſt be true; or elſe there is no Force or *Security* in the Objection you here bring for the Inſtruction of the Layity. If it is well founded, then the Clergy can't poſſibly prove, they have any more Right to the Exerciſe of any Part of their Office than the Layity. Do they pretend to Ordain, Confirm, to admit or exclude Men from the Sacraments? By what Authority is all this done? Is it not, becauſe the Apoſtles, whoſe Succeſſors they are, did the ſame things? But then, ſay your Lordſhip's well-inſtructed Layity, this is nothing to the purpoſe: Prove your ſelves Apoſtles; prove, that every thing ſaid to the Apoſtles, belongs to you; and then it will be allow'd, that you may exerciſe theſe Powers, becauſe they exerciſed them: But as this is impoſſible to be done; ſo it is impoſſible for you to prove, that you have any Powers or Authorities, becauſe they had them.

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† Page 94.

And now, my Lord, if the Caſe be thus, what Apology ſhall we make for Chriſtianity, as it has been practis'd in all Ages? How ſhall we excuſe the noble Army of Martyrs, Saints and Confeſſors, who have boldly aſſerted the Right to ſo many Apoſtolical Powers? Could any Men in thoſe Ages pretend, *that every thing that was ſpoken to the Apoſtles, belonged to themſelves?* Falſe then, was their Claim, and preſumptuous their Authority, who ſhould pretend to any Apoſtolical Powers, becauſe the Apoſtles had them; when they could not prove, *that every thing that was ſpoken to the Apoſtles, belonged to them.*

Farther; to prove, that the above-mention'd Text does not confer the Power of Abſolution in the Clergy, you reaſon thus: *Whatever contradicts the natural Notions of God, and the Deſign and Tenour of the Goſpel, cannot be the true Meaning of any Paſſage in the Goſpel: But to make the Abſolution of weak and fallible Men, ſo neceſſary, or ſo valid, that God will not pardon without them; or that all are pardon'd, who have them pronounced over them, is, to contradict thoſe Notions, as well as the plain Tenour of the Goſpel* *.

* Page 94.

Be

Be pleas'd, my Lord, to point out your Adverſary: Name any one Church of *England* Man that ever taught this Romantick Doctrine which you are confuting. Whoever taught ſuch a Neceſſity of Abſolutions, that God will pardon none without them? Whoever declar'd, that all are pardon'd, who have them pronounc'd over them? We teach the *Neceſſity* and *Validity* of Sacraments; but do we ever declare, that all are ſav'd who receive them? Is there no *Medium* between Two Extreams? No ſuch thing, my Lord, as *Moderation!* Muſt every thing be thus Abſolute and Extravagant, or nothing at all?

In another Page, we have more of this ſame Colouring: *But to claim a Right to ſtand in God's ſtead, in ſuch a Sence, that they can abſolutely and certainly bleſs, or not bleſs, with their Voice alone: This is the higheſt Abſurdity and Blaſphemy, as it ſuppoſeth God to place a Set of Men above himſelf; and to put out of his own Hands the Diſpoſal of his Bleſſings and Curſes* †.

If your Lordſhip had employ'd all this Oratory againſt worſhipping the Sun or Moon, it had juſt affected your Adverſaries as much as this. For whoever taught, that any Set of Men could *Abſolutely* bleſs, or withold Bleſſing, independent of God? Whoever taught, that the Chriſtian Religion, or Sacraments, or

† Page 91.

Ab-

Abſolution ſav'd People on courſe, or without proper Diſpoſitions? Who ever claim'd ſuch an Abſolving Power, as to ſet himſelf above God, and to take from him the Diſpoſal of his own Bleſſings and Curſes? What has ſuch extravagant Deſcriptions, ſuch Romantick Characters of Abſolution, to do with that Power the Clergy juſtly claim? Cannot there be a Neceſſity in ſome Caſes of receiving Abſolution from their Hands, except they ſet themſelves above God? Is God robb'd of the Diſpoſal of his Bleſſings, when in Obedience to his own Commands, and in virtue of his own Authority, they admit ſome as Members of the Church, and exclude others from the Communion of it? Do they pretend to be Channels of Grace, or the Means of Pardon, by any Rights or Powers naturally inherent in them? Do they not in all theſe things conſider themſelves as Inſtruments of God, that are made miniſterial to the Edification of the Church, purely by his Will, and only ſo far as they act in Conformity to it? Now if it has pleas'd God to confer the Holy Ghoſt in Ordination, Confirmation, *&c.* only by them, and to annex the Grace of Pardon to the Impoſition of their Hands, on returning Sinners; is it any *Blaſphemy* for them to claim and exert their Power? Is the Prerogative of God injur'd, becauſe his own Inſtitutions are obey'd? Cannot he diſpenſe his Graces by what Perſons, and on what Terms he pleaſes? Is he depriv'd of the Diſpoſal of his Bleſſings, becauſe they are beſtow'd on Perſons according to his Order, and in obedience to his Authority? If I ſhould affirm,

affirm, that Biſhops have the ſole Power to Ordain and Confirm, would this be robbing God of his Diſpoſal of thoſe Graces that attend ſuch Actions? Is it not rather allowing and ſubmitting to God's own Diſpoſal, when we keep cloſe to thoſe Methods of it, which himſelf has preſcrib'd?

Pray, my Lord, conſider the Nature of Sacraments. Are not they neceſſary to Salvation? But is God therefore excluded from any Power of his own? Has he for that reaſon, ſet Bread and Wine in the Euchariſt, or Water in Baptiſm, above Himſelf? Has he put the Salvation of Men out of his own Power, becauſe it depends on his own Inſtitutions? Is the Salvation of Chriſtians leſs his own Act and Deed, or leſs the Effect of his own Mercy, becauſe theſe Sacraments in great meaſure contribute to effect it? Why then, my Lord, muſt that Impoſition of Hands, that is attended with his Grace of Pardon, and which has no Pretence to ſuch Grace, but in obedience to his Order, and in virtue of his Promiſe, be thus deſtructive of his Prerogative? Where is there any Diminution of his Honour or Authority, if ſuch Actions of the Clergy are made neceſſary to the Salvation of Souls in ſome Circumſtances, as their waſhing in Water, or their receiving Bread and Wine? Cannot God inſtitute Means of Grace, but thoſe Means muſt needs be above Himſelf? They owe all their Power and Efficacy to his Inſtitution; and can operate no farther than the Ends for which he inſtituted them. How then is he Dethron'd for being thus obey'd?

My

My Lord, you take no notice of Scripture; but in a new Way of your own contend againſt this Power, from the Nature of the Thing: Yet I muſt beg Leave to ſay, this Power ſtands upon as ſure a Bottom, and is as conſiſtent with the Goodneſs and Majeſty of God, as the Sacraments. If the annexing Grace to Sacraments, and making them neceſſary Means of Salvation, be a reaſonable Inſtitution of God; ſo is his annexing Pardon to the Impoſition of Hands by the Clergy on returning Sinners. The Grace or Bleſſing receiv'd in either Caſe, is of his own giving, and in a Method of his own preſcribing. And how this ſhould be any Injury to God's Honour, or Affront to his Majeſty, cannot eaſily be accounted for.

The Clergy juſtly claim a Power of Reconciling Men to God, from expreſs Texts of Scripture; and of delivering his Pardons to penitent Sinners. Your Lordſhip diſowns this Claim, as making Fallible Men the Abſolute Diſpenſers of God's Bleſſings, and putting it in their Power to damn and ſave as they pleaſe. But, my Lord, nothing of this Extravagance is included in it. They are only entruſted with a *Conditional* Power; which they are to exerciſe according to the Rules God has given; and it only obtains its Effect when it is ſo exercis'd. Every inſtituted Means of Grace is *Conditional*; and is only then effectual, when it is attended with ſuch Circumſtances, as are requir'd by God. If the Clergy, thro' Weakneſs, Paſſion or Prejudice, exclude

clude Perſons from the Church of God, they injure only themſelves. But, my Lord, are theſe Powers nothing, becauſe they may be exercis'd in vain? Have the Clergy no Right at all to them, becauſe they are not *Abſolutely infallible* in the Exerciſe of them?

Can you prove, my Lord, that they are not neceſſary, becauſe they have not always the ſame Effect? May not that be neceſſary to Salvation, which is only effectual on *certain Conditions*? Is not the Chriſtian Religion neceſſary to Salvation, tho' all Chriſtians are not ſav'd? Are not the Sacraments neceſſary Means of Grace, tho' the Means of Grace obtain'd thereby is only Conditional? Is every one neceſſarily improv'd in Grace, who receives the Sacrament? Or is it leſs neceſſary, becauſe the ſalutary Effects of it are not more univerſal? Why then muſt the Impoſition of Hands be leſs neceſſary, becauſe the Grace of it is Conditional, and only obtain'd in due and proper Circumſtances? Is Abſolution nothing, becauſe if witheld wrongfully, it injures not the Perſon who is deny'd it; and if given without due Diſpoſitions in the Penitent, it avails nothing? Is not this equally true of the Sacraments, if they are deny'd wrongfully, or adminiſtred to unprepar'd Receivers? But do they therefore ceaſe to be ſtanding and neceſſary Means of Grace?

The Argument therefore againſt this Power, drawn from the Ignorance or Paſſions of the Clergy, whereby they may miſtake or pervert the Application of it, can be of no Force; ſince it is as Conditional as any other Chriſtian Inſtitution. The Salvation of no Man can be endanger'd by the Ignorance or Paſſions of any Clergyman in the Uſe of this Power: If they err in the Exerciſe of it, the Conſequences of their Error only affect themſelves. The Adminiſtration of the Sacraments is certainly entruſted to them: But will any one ſay, that the Sacraments are not neceſſary to Salvation; becauſe they may, through Ignorance or Paſſion, make an ill Uſe of this Truſt?

There is nothing in this Doctrine to gratifie the Pride of Clergymen, or encourage them to Lord it over the Flock of Chriſt. If you could ſuppoſe an Atheiſt or a Deiſt in Orders; he might be arrogant, and domineer in the Exerciſe of his Powers: But who, that has the leaſt Senſe of Religion, can think it matter of Triumph, that he can deny the Sacraments, or refuſe his Benediction to any of his Flock? Can he injure or offend the leaſt of theſe; and will not God take Account? Or, if they fall through his Offence, will not their Blood be requir'd at his Hands?

Neither is there any thing in it that can enſlave the Layity to the Clergy; or make their Salvation depend upon their Arbitrary Will. Does any one think his Salvation in danger, becauſe the Sacraments (the neceſſary Means of it) are only to be adminiſtred by the Clergy? Why then muſt the Salvation of *Penitents* be endanger'd, or made dependent on the ſole Pleaſure of the Clergy, becauſe they alone can reconcile them to the Favour of God? If Perſons are unjuſtly denied the Sacraments, they may humbly hope, that God will not lay the Want of them to their Charge. And if they are unjuſtly kept out of the Church, and denied Admittance, they have no Reaſon to fear, but God will, notwithſtanding, accept them, provided they be in other reſpects proper Objects of his Favour.

But to proceed, your Lordſhip ſays, *The Apoſtles might poſſibly underſtand the Power of Remitting and Retaining Sins, to be that Power of Laying their Hands upon the Sick* *.

Is this *Poſſible*, my Lord? Then it is *poſſible*, the Apoſtles might think, that in the Power here intended to be given them, *nothing at all* was intended to be given them. For the Power of Healing the Sick, was already confer'd upon them. Therefore if no more was intended to

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be given them in this Text, it cannot be interpreted, as having entitled them properly to any Power at all.

2. The Power mention'd here, was ſomething that Jeſus promis'd he would give them Hereafter: Which plainly ſuppoſes, they had it not then: But they then had the Power of *Healing*; therefore ſomething elſe muſt be intended here.

3. The Power of the *Keys* has always been look'd upon as the higheſt in the Apoſtolical Order. But if it related only to the Power of Healing, it could not be ſo: For the *Seventy*, who were inferiour to the Apoſtles, had this Power.

4. The very Manner of Expreſſion in this Place, proves, that the Power here intended to be given, could not relate to *Healing the Sick*, or to any thing of that nature; but to ſome *Spiritual Power*, whoſe Effects ſhould not be *Viſible*; but be made good by virtue of God's Promiſe. Thus, *Whomſoever ye ſhall* heal *on Earth*, I will heal *in Heaven*, borders too near upon an Abſurdity. There is no occaſion to promiſe to make *good* ſuch Actions as are good already, and have antecedently produc'd their Effects. Perſons who were reſtor'd to Health, to their Sight, or the Uſe of their Limbs, did not want to be aſſured, that the Apoſtles, by whom they were reſtored, had a Power to that End; the Exerciſe of which Power, prov'd and confirm'd it ſelf.

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There was no need therefore of a Divine Aſſurance, that a Perſon who was healed, was actually healed in virtue of it. But when we conſider this Promiſe, as relating to a *Power* whoſe *Effects* are not *viſible*; as the *Pardon of Sins*, the Terms whereby it is expreſt, are moſt proper: And it is very reaſonable to ſuppoſe God promiſing, that the Spiritual Powers exercis'd by his Miniſters on Earth, though they do not here produce their *viſible Effects*, ſhall yet be made good and effectual by him in *Heaven*.

Theſe Reaſons, my Lord, I ſhould think, are ſufficient to convince any one, that the Apoſtles could not *poſſibly* underſtand theſe Words in the Sence of your Lordſhip.

Let us now conſider the Commiſſion given to *Peter*. Our Saviour ſaid to him, *Thou art* Peter, *and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it: And I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and whatſoever thou ſhalt bind on Earth, ſhall be bound in Heaven; and whatſoever thou ſhalt looſe on Earth, ſhall be looſed in Heaven.*

Now, my Lord, how ſhould it enter into the Thoughts of *Peter*, that nothing was here intended, or promiſed by our Saviour, but a Power of Healing; which he not only had before, but alſo many other Diſciples, who were not Apoſtles? *I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*; that is, according to your Lordſhip, *I will give thee Power to heal the Sick.*

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Can any thing be more contrary to the plain obvious Sence of the Words? Can any one be ſaid to have the *Keys* of the Kingdom of Heaven, becauſe he may be the Inſtrument of reſtoring People to Health? Are Perſons Members of Chriſt's Kingdom, with any regard to Health? How then can He have any Power in that Kingdom; or be ſaid to have the *Keys* of it, who is only empower'd to cure Diſtempers? Could any one be ſaid to have the *Keys* of a Temporal Kingdom, who had no Temporal Power given him in that Kingdom? Muſt not he therefore who has the *Keys* of a Spiritual Kingdom, have ſome Spiritual Power in that Kingdom?

Chriſt has told us, that his Kingdom is not of this World. Your Lordſhip has told us, that it is ſo foreign to every thing of this World, that no *Worldly Terrors* or Allurements, no Pains or Pleaſures of the Body, can have any thing to do with it. Yet here your Lordſhip teaches us, that He may have the *Keys* of this Spiritual Kingdom, who has only a Power over Diſeaſes. My Lord, are not Sickneſs and Health, Sight and Limbs, Things of this World? Have they not ſome relation to Bodily Pleaſures and Pains? How then can a Power about Things wholly confin'd to this World, be a Power in a Kingdom that is not of this World? The Force of the Argument lies here: Our Saviour has aſſur'd us, that his Kingdom is not of this World: Your Lordſhip takes it to be of ſo Spiritual a Nature, that it ought not, nay, that it cannot be encou-

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rag'd or eſtabliſh'd by any Worldly Powers. *Our Saviour gives to his Apoſtles the Keys of this Kingdom.* Yet you have ſo far forgotten your own Doctrine, and the Spirituality of this Kingdom, that you tell us, He here gave them a Temporal Power of Diſeaſes; though He ſays, they were the *Keys of his Kingdom* which he gave them. Suppoſe any Succeſſor of the Apoſtles ſhould from this Text pretend to the Power of the Sword, to make People Members of this Kingdom: Muſt not the Anſwer be, that he miſtakes the Power, by not conſidering, that they are only the *Keys* of a *Spiritual*, not of a Temporal Kingdom, which were here deliver'd to the Apoſtles.

I humbly preſume, my Lord, that this would be as good an Anſwer to your Lordſhip's Doctrine, as to Theirs, who claim the Right of the Sword, till it can be ſhewn that *Health* and *Sickneſs*, *Sight* and *Limbs*, do not as truly relate to the Things of this World as the Power of the Sword.

If this Power of the Keys muſt be underſtood, only as a Power of inflicting or curing Diſeaſes; then the Words, in the proper Conſtruction of them, muſt run thus: *Thou art* Peter, *and upon this Rock I will build my Church*, i. e. a peculiar Society of Healthful People, *and the Gates of Hell ſhall never prevail againſt it*; i. e. They ſhall always be in a State of Health. *I will give unto Thee, the Keys of this Kingdom of Heaven*, i. e. Thou ſhalt have the Power of inflicting and curing Diſtempers; *and whatſoever thou ſhalt bind on Earth, ſhall be bound*

*bound in Heaven*, i.e. on whomſoever thou ſhalt inflict the Leproſie on Earth, He ſhall be a Leper in Heaven; *and whatſoever thou ſhalt looſe on Earth, ſhall be loos'd in Heaven*, i. e. whomſoever thou ſhalt cure of that Diſeaſe on Earth, ſhall be perfectly cur'd of it in Heaven.

This, without putting any Force upon the Words, is your Lordſhip's own Interpretation; which expoſes the Honour and Authority of Scriptures as much as the greateſt Enemy to them can wiſh. If our Saviour cou'd mean by theſe Words, only a *Power* of *healing Diſtempers*; or if the Apoſtles underſtood them in that Sence, we may as well believe, that when He ſaid, *His Kingdom was not of this World*, that he meant, it was of this World; and that the Apoſtles ſo underſtood him too.

But however, for the Benefit and Edification of the Layity, your Lordſhip has another Interpretation for them: You ſay, *if they* (the Apoſtles) *did apply this Power of remitting Sins to the certain Abſolution of particular Perſons, it is plain, they could do it upon no other Bottom but this; that God's Will, and good Pleaſure, about ſuch particular Perſons was infallibly communicated to them.*

Pray my Lord, how, or where is this ſo plain? Is it plain, that they never baptiz'd Perſons, till God had *infallibly communicated his good Pleaſure to them about ſuch particular Perſons*? Baptiſm is an Inſtitution equally Sacred with this other, and puts the Perſon baptiz'd in the ſame State of Grace, *that Abſolution* does the Penitent. Baptiſm is deſign'd

ſign'd for the Remiſſion of Sin. It is an Ordinance to which Abſolution is conſequent; but I ſuppoſe, Perſons may be baptiz'd without ſuch *Infallible Communication* promiſed, as your Lordſhip contends for. If therefore it be not neceſſary for the Exerciſe of Abſolution by Baptiſm, why muſt it be neceſſary for Abſolution by the Impoſition of Hands?

Can Paſtors without Infallibility, baptize Heathens, and abſolve, or be the Inſtruments of abſolving them thereby from their Sins? Are they not as able to abſove Chriſtian Penitents, or reſtore thoſe who have Apoſtatiz'd? If Human Knowledge, and the common Rules of the Church, be ſufficient to direct the Prieſt to whom he ought to adminiſter the Sacraments; they are alſo ſufficient for the Exerciſe of this other Part of the Sacerdotal Office.

But your Lordſhip proceeds thus: *Not that they themſelves Abſolved any.*

No, my Lord, no more than Water in Baptiſm of *it ſelf* purifies the Soul from Sin. This Baptiſmal Water, is, notwithſtanding neceſſary for the Remiſſion of our Sins.

Again you ſay, *Not that God was oblig'd to bind and looſe the Guilt of Men, according to their Declarations, conſidered as their own Deciſions, and their own Determinations* *. No, my Lord; who-

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ever thought ſo? God is not oblig'd to confer Grace by the *Baptiſmal Water*, conſider'd only as *Water*; but He is, conſider'd as *his own Inſtitution* for that End and Purpoſe. So, if theſe Declarations are conſider'd only as *the Declarations of Men*, God is not obliged by them: But when they are conſider'd as the Declarations of *Men* whom he has eſpecially Authoriz'd to make *ſuch* Declarations in his Name, then they are as effectual with God, as any other of his Inſtitutions whatever.

I proceed now to a Paragraph that bears as hard upon our Saviour, as ſome others have done upon his Apoſtles and their Succeſſors; where your Lordſhip deſigns to prove, that though Chriſt claim'd a Power of remitting Sins Himſelf, or in his own Perſon, yet that he had really no ſuch Power.

You go upon theſe Words: *If we look back upon our Saviour himſelf, we ſhall find, that when he declares that the Son of Man had Power upon Earth to forgive Sins, even He himſelf either meant by it, the Power of a miraculous Releaſing Man from his Affliction; or if it related to another more Spiritual Sence of the Words, the Power of declaring, that the Man's Sins were forgiven by God* *.

* *Preſervative*, p. 94.

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The Words of our Saviour, which we are to look back upon, are theſe: *Whether is it eaſier to ſay, thy Sins are forgiven thee; or to ſay, ariſe, take up thy Bed and walk? But that ye may know, the Son of Man hath Power on Earth to forgive Sins,* (Mark 2. 9, 10.) As if he had ſaid, "Is not the "ſame Divine Authority and Power requir'd? "Is it not a Work as peculiar to God, to per- "form miraculous Cures, as to forgive Sins? "The Reaſon therefore, why I now chuſe to "declare my Authority, rather by ſaying, *Thy "Sins are forgiven thee,* than by ſaying, *Ariſe and "walk,* was, purely to teach you this Truth, "that the Power of the Son of Man is not con- "fin'd to Bodily Cures; but that he has Power "on Earth to forgive Sins.

This, my Lord, is the firſt obvious Sence of the Words; and therefore I take it to be the True Sence. But your Lordſhip can look back upon them, till you find, that Chriſt has not this Power, though he claims it expreſsly; but that he only intends a Power of doing *ſomething or other,* which no more imports a Power of forgiving Sins, than of remitting any Temporal Debt or Penalty.

If our Bleſſed Saviour had intended to teach the World, that he was inveſted with this Power, I would gladly know, how he muſt have expreſs'd himſelf, to have ſatisfy'd your Lordſhip that he really had it? He muſt have told you, that he had not this Power; and then poſſibly,

your Lordſhip would have taught us, that he had this Power. For no one can diſcover any Reaſon why you ſhould deny it him; but becauſe he has in expreſs Words claim'd and aſſerted it. I hope, your Lordſhip has not ſo low an Opinion of our Saviour's Perſon, as to think it unreaſonable in the Nature of the Thing, that He ſhould have this Power. Where does it contradict any Principle of Reaſon, to ſay, that a *King* ſhould be able to pardon his Subjects? Since there is no Abſurdity then in the Thing it ſelf; and it is ſo expreſsly aſſerted in Scripture; it is juſt Matter of Surprize, that your Lordſhip ſhould carry your Reader from a plain conſiſtent Sence of the Words, to *either this or that Something or other*, the Origin whereof is only to be ſought for in your Lordſhip's own Invention; rather than not exclude Chriſt from a Power which he declar'd he had, and declar'd he had it for this very Reaſon, *that we might know that he had it*. Our Saviour has told us, that the Way to Heaven is *narrow*. Your Lordſhip might as reaſonably prove from hence, that he meant, it was *broad*, as that he did not mean he could forgive Sins, when he ſaid, *that ye may know, that the Son of Man hath Power on Earth to forgive Sins.*

Your Lordſhip has rejected all *Church Authority*, and deſpis'd the pretended *Powers* of the Clergy, for this reaſon; becauſe Chriſt is the *ſole King, ſole Lawgiver, and Judge in his Kingdom.* But, it ſeems, your Lordſhip, notwithſtanding, thinks it now time to depoſe him: And this *ſole King* in *his own Kingdom*, muſt

not

not be allow'd to be capable of pardoning his own Subjects.

This Doctrine, my Lord, is deliver'd, I ſuppoſe, as your other Doctrines, out of a hearty Concern and *Chriſtian* Zeal for the Privileges of the Layity; and to ſhew, that your Lordſhip is not only able to limit as you pleaſe, the Authority of *Temporal Kings*; but alſo to make Chriſt himſelf *ſole King*, and yet *no King*, in his Spiritual Kingdom. For, my Lord, the Kingdom of Chriſt is a Society, founded in order to the Reconciliation of Sinners to God. If therefore Chriſt could not pardon Sins, to what End could he either erect, or how could he ſupport his Kingdom, which is only in the great and laſt Deſign of it, to conſiſt of Abſolv'd Sinners? He that cannot forgive Sins in a Kingdom that is erected for the Remiſſion of Sins, can no more be *ſole King* in it, than he that has no *Temporal Power*, can be *ſole King* in a *Temporal Kingdom*. Therefore your Lordſhip has been thus mighty ſerviceable to the Chriſtian Layity, as to teach them, that Chriſt is not only *ſole King*, but *no King* in his Kingdom.

This is not the Firſt Contradiction your Lordſhip has unhappily fallen into, in your Attempts upon *Kingly Authority*. Nor is it the laſt; which I ſhall preſume to obſerve to the *Common Senſe* of your Layity.

Again,

Again, in this Account of our Bleſſed Saviour, your Lordſhip has made no difference between Him and his Apoſtles, as to this *Abſolving Authority*. For you ſay, the *Great Commiſſion* given to them, imply'd either a Power of Releaſing Men from their Bodily Afflictions; or of declaring ſuch to be pardon'd, whom God had aſſur'd them that he had pardon'd: And this is *all* that you here allow to Chriſt himſelf.

Your Lordſhip's calling him ſo often *King*, and *ſole King*, *&c.* in his Kingdom, and yet making him a *Mere Creature* in it, is too like the Inſult, and deſign'd Sarcaſm of the *Jews*, who, when they had nail'd him to the Croſs, writ over his Head, *This is the King of the Jews.*

But to proceed: Your Lordſhip proves, That our Saviour had not the Power of *forgiving Sins*; becauſe *His Way of Expreſſion was, Thy Sins are forgiven thee. This was plainly to acknowledge, and keep up that True Notion, that God alone forgiveth Sins.*

Let us therefore put this Argument in Form. Chriſt has affirm'd, that he had Power to forgive Sins: But his Way was, to ſay, *Thy Sins are forgiven thee:* Therefore Chriſt had not Power to forgive Sins. *Q. E. D.*

It is much, your Lordſhip did not recommend this to your Laying as another *Invincible Demonſtration*. For by the help of it, my Lord, they may prove, that our Saviour could no more *heal Diſeaſes*, than *forgive Sins*. As thus; Chriſt indeed pretends to a Power of Healing Diſeaſes; but his uſual way of ſpeaking to the diſeas'd Perſon, was, *Thy Faith hath made Thee whole*; therefore He had not the Power of *Healing* Diſeaſes. The Argument has the ſame force againſt one Power, as againſt the other. If He did not *forgive Sins*, becauſe he ſaid, *thy Sins are forgiven Thee*; no more did He heal Diſeaſes, becauſe he ſaid, *thy Faith hath made Thee whole.*

I have a Claim of ſeveral Debts upon a Man: I forgive him them all, in theſe Words, *Thy Debts are remitted Thee.* A Philoſophical Wit ſtands by, and pretends to prove, that I had not the Power of remitting theſe Debts; becauſe I ſaid, *Thy Debts are remitted Thee.* What can come up to, or equal ſuch *profound Philoſophy*, but the *Divinity* of one who teaches, our Saviour could not forgive Sins, becauſe He ſaid, *Thy Sins are forgiven Thee?*

But your Lordſhip ſays, the Reaſon why our Saviour thus expreſſed Himſelf, *Thy Sins are forgiven Thee, was plainly to keep up that true Notion, that God alone forgiveth Sins.* Therefore, my Lord, according to this Doctrine, our Saviour was oblig'd not to claim *any*

*Power*

Power that was *peculiar* or *appropriated* to God, *alone*. For if this be an Argument, why He ſhould not *forgive Sins*, it is alſo an Argument, that He ought not to claim any other Power, any more than this; which is proper to God, and only belongs to Him. But, my Lord, if He did expreſs himſelf thus, that he might not lay Claim to any thing that was peculiar to God, how came He in ſo many other Reſpects, to lay Claim to ſuch things, as are as truly peculiar to God, as the Forgiveneſs of Sins? How came He in ſo many Inſtances to make Himſelf equal to God? How came He to ſay, *Ye believe in God, believe alſo in me? And that Men ſhould Worſhip the Son, even as the Father?* That He was the Son of God; That he was the Way, the Truth, and the Life?

Are not Evangelical Faith, Worſhip and Truſt, Duties that are ſolely due to God? Does He not as much invade the Sovereignty of God, who lays claim to theſe Duties, as He that pretends *to forgive Sins*? Did not Chriſt alſo give his Diſciples *Power and Authority* over Devils and Unclean Spirits, and Power to heal all manner of Diſeaſes?

Now,

Now, if Chriſt did not aſſume a Power to forgive Sin, becauſe God alone could forgive Sins, it is alſo as unaccountable, that He ſhould exercise other *Authorities* and Powers which are as ſtrictly peculiar to God, as that of forgiving Sins. As if a Perſon ſhould diſown that Chriſt is Omniſcient, becauſe Omniſcience is an *Attribute* of God alone; and yet confeſs his Omnipotence, which is an Attribute equally *Divine*.

But farther, my Lord: Did our Saviour thus deſignedly expreſs himſelf, leaſt He ſhould be thought to aſſume any Power which was Divine, then it is certain (according to this Opinion) that if He had aſſumed any ſuch Power, or pretended to do what was peculiar to God, he had been the Occaſion of miſleading Men into Error. For if this be a plain Reaſon, why He expreſſed himſelf ſo as to diſown this Power, it is plain, that if He had own'd it, He had been condemn'd by this Argument, as teaching falſe Doctrine.

Now if this would have been interpretatively falſe Doctrine in Chriſt, to take upon Himſelf any thing that was peculiar to God, the Apoſtles were guilty of propagating this falſe Doctrine. For there is ſcarce any known Attribute or Power of God, but they aſcribe it to our Saviour. They declare him Eternal, Omnipotent, Omniſcient, *&c.* Is it not a *true Notion*, that God alone can Create, and is Governour of the Univerſe? Yet the Apoſtles expreſly aſſure us of Chriſt, that *all things were created by Him*, and

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that *God hath put all things in Subjection under his Feet.* 'Tis very ſurpriſing, that your Lordſhip ſhould exclude Chriſt from this Power of *forgiving* Sins, tho' he has expreſly ſaid He could forgive Sins, becauſe ſuch a Power belongs only to God; when it appears thro' the whole Scripture, that there is ſcarce any Divine Power which our Saviour himſelf has not claim'd, nor any Attribute of God, but what his Apoſtles have aſcrib'd to him. They have made Him the *Creator*, the *Preſerver*, the *Governour* of the Univerſe, the Author of Eternal Salvation to all that obey him; and yet your Lordſhip tells us, that He did not pretend to *forgive Sins*, becauſe that was a Power peculiar to God.

Here is then (to ſpeak in your Lordſhip's elegant Style) an *immoveable Reſting-Place* for your Laity to ſet their Feet upon; here is an *Argument that will laſt them for ever*; They muſt believe that our Saviour did not forgive Sins, *becauſe* this was a Power that belong'd to God, tho' the Scriptures aſſure us that every other Divine Power belong'd to Chriſt. That is, they muſt believe, that tho' our Saviour claim'd all Divine Powers, yet not this Divine Power, *becauſe* it is a Divine Power. And, my Lord, if they have the common Senſe to believe this, they may alſo believe that tho' our Saviour took human Nature upon him, yet that he had not a human Soul, becauſe it is proper to Man. They may believe, that any Perſon who has all Kingly Power, cannot remit or reprieve a Malefactor, *becauſe* it is an Act of Kingly Power to do it; or that a Biſhop cannot

ſuſpend any Offender of his Dioceſe, becauſe it is an Act of Epiſcopal Power to do it. All theſe Reaſons are as ſtrong and Demonſtrative as that Chriſt, who claim'd all Divine Powers, could not forgive Sins, *becauſe* it was a *Divine Power.*

Laſtly, In this Argument your Lordſhip has plainly declar'd againſt the Divinity of Chriſt, and rank'd him in the Order of Creatures. Your Lordſhip ſays, Chriſt did not forgive Sins, becauſe it is God *alone who can forgive Sins*; as plain an Argument as can be offer'd, that in your Lordſhip's Opinion, Chriſt is not God: For if you believ'd him, in a true and proper Senſe, God, how could you exclude him from the Power of forgiving Sins, *becauſe* God alone can forgive Sins? It is inconſiſtent with Senſe and Reaſon to deny this Power to Chriſt becauſe it is a Divine Power, but only becauſe you believe him not to be a Divine Perſon. If Chriſt was God, then he might forgive Sins, tho' God alone can forgive Sins: But you ſay, Chriſt cannot forgive Sins, becauſe God *alone* can forgive Sins; therefore it is plain, that according to your Lordſhip's Doctrine, Chriſt is not truly, or in a proper Senſe, God.

Here, my Lord, I deſire again to appeal to the *Common Senſe* of your Laity; let them judge betwixt the Scriptures and your Lordſhip. The Scriptures plainly and frequently aſcribe all Divine Attributes to Chriſt: They make him the Creatour and Governour of the World; God over all, bleſſed for ever. Yet your Lordſhip

makes him a Creature, and denies him *ſuch* a Power, becauſe it belongs only to God.

You your ſelf, my Lord, have allow'd him to be abſolute Ruler over the Conſciences of Men; to be an arbitrary Diſpenſer of the Means of Salvation to Mankind; than which Powers, none can be more Divine: And yet you hold, that he cannot forgive Sins, becauſe Pardon of Sin can only be the Effect of a Divine Power.

Is it not equally a Divine Power, (even according to your Lordſhip) to rule over the Conſciences of Men, to give Laws of Salvation, and to act in theſe Affairs with an uncontroulable Power, as *to forgive Sins*?

My Lord, let their Common Senſe here diſcover the Abſurdity (for I muſt call it ſo) of your *New Scheme* of Government in Chriſt's Kingdom. Chriſt is *abſolute* Lord of it, (according to your ſelf) and can make or unmake Laws relating to it; can diſpenſe or withold Grace as he pleaſes in this Spiritual Kingdom, all which Powers are purely Divine, yet you ſay he cannot forgive Sins, tho' every expreſs Power which you have allow'd him over the Conſciences of Men, be as truly a *Divine Power* as that of *forgiving Sins*. Has not Chriſt a proper and perſonal Power to give Grace to his Subjects? Is he not Lord over their Conſciences? And are not theſe Powers as truly appropriated to God? And has not your Lordſhip often taught them to be ſo, as that of *Forgiveneſs of Sins*? Is it not as much the Prerogative

of

of God to have any natural intrinſick Power, to confer Grace, or any Spiritual Benefit to the Souls of Men, as to forgive Sins? Has not your Lordſhip deſpis'd all the Adminiſtrations of the Clergy, becauſe God's Graces can only come from himſelf, and are only to be receiv'd from his own Hands? The Concluſion therefore is this, either Chriſt has a Perſonal intrinſick Power to confer Grace in his Kingdom, or he has not; if you ſay he has not, then you are chargable with the Colluſion of making him a King in a Spiritual Kingdom, where you allow him no Spiritual Power: If you ſay he has, then you fall into this Contradiction, that you allow him to have Divine Powers, tho' he cannot have Divine Powers; that is, you allow him to *give Grace*, tho' it is a Divine Power, and not to *forgive Sins*, becauſe it is a Divine Power. My Lord, I wiſh your Laity (if there be any to whom you can render it intelligible) much Joy of ſuch profound Divinity. Or if there are others who are more taken with your Lordſhip's Sincerity, I deſire them not to paſs by this following remarkable Inſtance of it: Your Lordſhip has here as plainly declar'd, as Words can conſequentially declare any thing, that you do not believe Chriſt to be God, yet profeſs your ſelf Biſhop of a Church, whoſe Liturgy in ſo many repeated Teſtimonies declares the contrary Doctrine, and which obliges you to expreſs your Aſſent and Conſent to ſuch Doctrine. My Lord, I here call upon your *Sincerity*, either Declare Chriſt to be Perfect God, and then ſhew why he could not *forgive Sins*, or Deny him to be Perfect God, and then ſhew how you

you can ſincerely declare your *Aſſent* and *Conſent* to the Doctrines of the Church of *England*.

This, my Lord, has an Appearance of Prevarication, which you cannot, I hope, charge upon any of your Adverſaries; who if they cannot think, that to be ſincere is the only thing neceſſary to recommend Men to the Favour of God, yet may have as much, or poſſibly more Sincerity, than thoſe who do think ſo.

Before I take leave of your Lordſhip, I muſt take Notice of a *Reſting-Place*, a *ſtrong Retreat*, a *laſting Foundation*, i. e. *a Demonſtration in the ſtricteſt Senſe* of the Words, that all *Church-Communion* is unneceſſary.

Your Lordſhip ſets it out in theſe Words.

*I am not now going to accuſe you of a Hereſie againſt Charity, but of a Hereſie againſt the Poſſibility and Nature of Things.* As thus, *Mr.* Nelſon *(for Inſtance) thinks himſelf oblig'd in Conſcience to Communicate with ſome of our Church. Upon this you declare he hath no Title to God's Mercy; and you and all the World allow, that if he communicates with you whilſt his Conſcience tells him it is a Sin, he is ſelf-condemn'd and out of God's Favour. That Notion, (viz.* the Neceſſity of Church-Communion) *therefore, which implies this great invincible Abſurdity, cannot be true.*

Pray, my Lord, what is this wond'rous Curioſity of a *Demonſtration*, but the common Caſe of an *erroneous Conſcience*? Did the ſtricteſt Contenders for Church-Communion ever teach, *that*

*any*

*any Terms* are to be comply'd with againſt Conſcience? But its a ſtrange Concluſion to infer from thence, that there is no Obligation to Communion, or that all Things are to be held indifferent, becauſe they are not to be comply'd with againſt one's Conſcience.

The Truths of the Chriſtian Religion have the ſame Nature and Obligation, whatever our Opinions are of them, and thoſe that are neceſſary to be believed, continue ſo, whither we can perſwade our ſelves to believe them or not. I ſuppoſe your Lordſhip will not ſay, that the Articles of Faith and neceſſary Inſtitutions of the Chriſtian Religion, are no otherways neceſſary, than becauſe we believe them to be ſo, that our Perſwaſion is the only Cauſe of the Neceſſity; but if their Neceſſity be not owing merely to our belief of them, then it is certain that our Diſbelief of them, cannot make them leſs neceſſary. If the Ordinances of Chriſt, and the Articles of Faith are neceſſary, becauſe Chriſt has made them ſo, that Neceſſity muſt continue the ſame, whether we believe and obſerve them or not.

So that, my Lord, we may ſtill maintain the neceſſity of Church-Communion, and the ſtrict obſervance of Chriſt's Ordinances, notwithſtanding that People have different perſwaſions in theſe Matters, preſuming *that our Opinions* can no more alter the nature or neceſſity of Chriſt's Inſtitutions, than we can believe *Error* into *Truth*, *Good* into *Evil*, or *Light* into *Darkneſs*. I ſhall think

think my ſelf no *Heretick againſt the Nature of Things*, tho' I tell a *Conſcientious Socinian*, that the Divinity of Chriſt is neceſſary to be believed, or a *Conſcientious Jew*, that it is neceſſary to be a Chriſtian in order to be ſaved. But if your Lordſhips Demonſtration was accepted, we ſhould be oblig'd to give up the neceſſity of every Doctrine and Inſtitution, to every Diſbeliever that pretended Conſcience. We muſt not tell any Party of People, that they are in any danger for being out of Communion with us, if they do but follow their own Perſwaſion.

Your Lordſhip's *Invincible Demonſtration* proceeds thus.

*We muſt not inſiſt upon the Neceſſity of joyning with any particular Church, becauſe then Conſcientious Perſons will be in Danger either way; for if there be a Neceſſity of it, then there is a Danger if they do not joyn with it, and if they comply againſt their Conſciences, the Danger is the ſame.*

What an inextricable Difficulty is here! How ſhall Divinity or Logick be able to relieve us!

Be pleas'd, my Lord, to accept of this Solution in lieu of your Demonſtration.

I will ſuppoſe the Caſe of a *Conſcientious Jew*; I tell him that Chriſtianity is the only covenanted Method of Salvation, and that he can have no Title to the Favour of God, 'till he profeſſes the

[illegible] in Christ. What, replies he, would you have me turn [illegible] Persecute Christianity against my Conscience. I am glad of that, I am [illegible] Conscience, and can [illegible] Conscience. And to be sure [illegible] Conscientious Christian [illegible] as Jesus [illegible]

There is still the same [illegible] believing in Christ, Christianity [illegible] Method of Salvation; the [illegible] can persuade himself [illegible] to all Jews and Unbelievers [illegible] they can only be saved by [illegible] ry. That a false Religion [illegible] a true one; nor a true one [illegible] fidence of their Opinion, [illegible] so unhappy, as to reject [illegible] they must be left to [illegible] Covenant. And now, my Lord, [illegible] come of this mighty Demonstration [illegible] prove that Christianity is not necessary [illegible] the Conscientious Jew may [illegible] It may as well prove, that the Moon is as large, [illegible] than a Man's Head, because an ignorant Countryman may think it no larger.

Is there any Person of *Common Sense* [illegible] would think it a Demonstration, that he is not obliged to go to Church, because a *Conscientious* Dissenter will not? Could we think it less

L [illegible] necessary

neceſſary to be a Chriſtian, becauſe a *ſincere Jew* cannot embrace Chriſtianity? Could he take it to be an indifferent Matter, whether he believed the Divinity of Chriſt, becauſe a *Conſcientious Socinian* cannot? Yet this is your Lordſhip's *invincible Demonſtration*, that we ought not to inſiſt upon the neceſſity of Church-Communion, becauſe a *Conſcientious Disbeliever* cannot comply with it.

A ſmall Degree of *Common Senſe*, would teach a Man that true Religion, and the Terms of Salvation muſt have the ſame obligatory Force, whether we reaſon rightly about them or not; and that they who believe and practice according to them, are in expreſs Covenant with God, which entitles them to his Favour; whilſt thoſe who are ſincerely Erronious, have nothing but the ſincerity of their Errors to plead, and are left to ſuch Mercy of God, as is without any Promiſe. Here, my Lord, is nothing frightful or abſurd in this Doctrine, they who are in the Church which Chriſt has founded, are upon Terms which entitles them to God's Favour; they who are out of it, fall to his Mercy.

But your Lordſhip is not content with the Terms of the Goſpel, or a Doctrine that only ſaves a particular Sort of People; this is a narrow View, not wide enough for your Notions of *Liberty*. Particular Religions, and particular Covenants, are *demonſtrated* to be abſurd, *becauſe* particular Perſons may Diſbelieve, or not ſubmit to them.

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Your Lordſhip muſt have Doctrines that will ſave all People alike, in every way that their Perſwaſion leads them to take: But, my Lord, there needs be no greater Demonſtration againſt your Lordſhip's Doctrine, than that it equally favours every way of Worſhip; for an Argument which equally proves every Thing, has been generally thought to prove nothing; which happens to be the Caſe of your Lordſhip's *Important Demonſtration.*

Your Lordſhip indeed only inſtances in a particular Perſon, Mr. *Nelſon*: but your *Demonſtration* is as ſerviceable to any other Perſon who has left any other Church whatever. The *Conſcientious Quaker, Muggletonian, Independant,* or *Socinian,* &c. have the ſame right to obey Conſcience, and blame any Church that aſſumes a Power of cenſuring them, as Mr *Nelſon* had; and if they are cenſur'd by any Church, that Church is as guilty of the ſame *Hereſie againſt the Nature of Things,* as that Church which cenſur'd Mr. *Nelſon,* or any Church that ſhould pretend to cenſure any other Perſon whatever.

I am not at all Surpriz'd, that your Lordſhip ſhould teach this Doctrine, but its ſomething ſtrange, that ſuch an Argument ſhould be obtruded upon the World as an unheard of *Demonſtration,* and that in an *Appeal to common Senſe.* Suppoſe ſome Body or other in defence of your Lordſhip, ſhould take upon him to demonſtrate to the World, that there is no ſuch Thing as

Colour, becauſe there are ſome People that can't ſee it; or Sounds, becauſe there are ſome who don't hear them; He would have found out the only *Demonſtrations* in the World that could equal your Lordſhips, and would have as much reaſon to call thoſe *Hereticks againſt the Nature of Things*, who ſhould diſ-believe him, and inſiſt upon the reality of Sounds, as your Lordſhip has to call your Adverſaries ſo.

For, is there no neceſſity of Church-Communion, becauſe there are ſome who don't conceive it? Then there are no Sounds, becauſe there are ſome who don't hear them; for it is certainly as eaſie to believe away the *Truth* and *Reality*, as the *Neceſſity* of Things.

Some People have only taught us the *innocency of Error*, and been content with ſetting forth its harmleſs Qualities; but your Lordſhip has been a more hearty Advocate, and given it a *Power* over every Truth and Inſtitution of Chriſtianity. If we have but an *erronious Conſcience*, the whole Chriſtian Diſpenſation is cancell'd; all the Truth and Doctrines in the Bible are *Demonſtrated* to be unneceſſary, if we do not believe them.

How unhappily have the ſeveral Parties of Chriſtians been diſputing for many Ages, who if they could but have found out this *intelligible Demonſtration*, (from the Caſe of an erroneous Conſcience) would have ſeen the abſurdity of pretending to neceſſary Doctrines, and inſiſting upon

upon *Church-Communion*; but it muſt be acknowledged your Lordſhip's *new invented Engine* for the Deſtruction of *Churches*; and it may be expected the *good Chriſtians of no Church* will return your Lordſhip their Thanks for it.

Your Lordſhip has thought it a mighty Objection to ſome Doctrines in the *Church* of *England*, that the Papiſts might make ſome Advantage of them: But yet your own Doctrine defends *all* Communions alike, and ſerves the *Jew* and *Socinian*, *&c.* as much as any other ſort of People. Tho' this ſufficiently appears, from what has been already ſaid, yet that it may be ſtill more obvious to the *Common Senſe* of every one, I ſhall reduce theſe Doctrines to Practice, and ſuppoſe for once, that your Lordſhip intends to convert a Jew, a Quaker, or Socinian.

Now in order to make a Convert of any of them, theſe Preliminary PROPOSITIONS are to be firſt laid down according to your Lordſhip's Doctrine.

Some *Propoſitions* for the Improvement of true Religion.

*Propoſition* I. That we are neither more or leſs in the Favour of God, for living in any particular Method or Way of Worſhip, but purely as we are ſincere. *Preſerv.* page 90.

*Propoſ.* II. That no Church ought to unchurch another, or declare it out of God's Favour. *Preſerv.* p. 85.

*Propoſ.*

*Propoſ.* III. That nothing loſes us the Favour of God, but a wicked Inſincerity. *Ibid.*

*Propoſ.* IV. That a conſcientious Perſon can be in no Danger for being out of any particular Church. *Preſerv.* page 90.

*Propoſ.* V. That there is no ſuch Thing as any real Perfection or Excellency in any Religion, that can *juſtify* our adhering to it, but *that* all is founded in our Perſonal Perſuaſion. Which your Lordſhip thus proves, *When we left the Popiſh Doctrines, was it becauſe they were* actually *corrupt?* No; *The Reaſon was, becauſe we thought them ſo.* Therefore if we might leave the *Church of Rome*, not becauſe her Doctrines were corrupt, but becauſe we thought them ſo, then the ſame Reaſon will juſtify any one elſe, in leaving any Church, how true ſoever its Doctrines are; and conſequently there is no ſuch Thing, as any *real* Perfection or Excellency in any Religion conſider'd in it ſelf, but it is *right* or *wrong* according to our Perſwaſions about it. *Preſerv.* page 85.

*Propoſ.* VI. That Chriſt is *ſole* King and *Lawgiver* in his Kingdom, that no *Men* have any Power of Legiſlation in it; that if we would be good Members of it, we muſt ſhew our ſelves Subjects of Chriſt alone, without any Regard to Man's Judgment.

*Propoſ.* VII. That as Chriſt's Kingdom is not of this World, ſo when Worldly Encouragements

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are annexed to it, theſe are ſo many Diviſions againſt Chriſt and his own expreſs Word. *Serm.* page 11.

*Propoſ.* VIII. That to pretend to know the Hearts and Sincerity of Men, is Nonſenſe and Abſurdity. *Serm.* page 93.

*Propoſ.* IX. That God's Graces are only to be receiv'd immediately from himſelf. *Serm.* p. 89.

Theſe, my Lord, are your Lordſhips own Propoſitions, expreſſed in your own Terms without any Exaggeration.

And now, my Lord, begin as ſoon as you pleaſe, either with a *Quaker*, *Socinian*, or *Jew*; uſe any Argument whatſoever to convert them, and you ſhall have a ſufficient Anſwer from your own Propoſitions.

Will you tell the *Jew* that Chriſtianity is neceſſary to Salvation? He will anſwer from *Propoſ.* I. *That we are neither more or leſs in the Favour of God, for living in any particular Method or way of Worſhip, but purely as we are Sincere.*

Will your Lordſhip tell him, that the Truth of Chriſtianity is ſo well aſſerted, that there is no Excuſe left for Unbelievers? He will anſwer from *Propoſ.* V. *That all Religion is founded in perſonal Perſuaſion; that as your Lordſhip does not believe that Chriſt is come, becauſe he is actually come, but becauſe*

*becauſe you think he is come; ſo He does not disbelieve Chriſt becauſe he is not actually come, but becauſe he thinks he is not come.* So that here, my Lord, the *Jew* gives as good a reaſon why he is not a Chriſtian, as your Lordſhip does why you are not a Papiſt.

If your Lordſhip ſhould turn the Diſcourſe to a *Quaker*, and offer him any Reaſons for Embracing the Doctrine of the *Church of England*, you can't poſſibly have any better Succeſs; any one may ſee from your *Propoſitions*, that no Argument can be urg'd but what your Lordſhip has there fully anſwered. For ſince you allow nothing to the *Truth* of Doctrines, or the *Excellency* of any Communion as ſuch, it is demonſtrable that no Church or Communion can have any Advantage above another, which is abſolutely neceſſary in order to perſuade any ſenſible Man to exchange any Communion for another.

Will your Lordſhip tell a *Quaker* that there is any Danger in that particular Way that he is in?

He can anſwer from *Propoſ.* 1ſt, 3d, and 4th. *That a Conſcientious Perſon can't be in any Danger for being out of any particular Church.*

Will your Lordſhip tell him that his Religion is condemned by the Univerſal Church?

He can anſwer from *Propoſ.* 2d, *That no Church ought to unchurch another, or declare it out of God's Favour.*

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Will you tell him that Chriſt has inſtituted Sacraments as *neceſſary Means* of Grace, which he neglects to Obſerve?

He will anſwer you from *Propoſ.* IX. *That God's Graces are only to be received* immediately from himſelf. And to think that *Bread* and *Wine*, or the ſprinkling of Water is neceſſary to Salvation, is as abſurd, as to think any Order of the Clergy, is neceſſary to recommend us to God.

Will your Lordſhip tell him that he diſpleaſes God, by not holding ſeveral Articles of Faith, which Chriſt has required us to believe?

He can reply from *Propoſ.* III. *That nothing loſes us the Favour of God* but a *wicked Inſincerity.* And from *Propoſ.* V. That as your Lordſhip believes ſuch Things, not becauſe they are actually to be believ'd, but becauſe you think ſo; ſo he disbelieves them, not becauſe they are actually falſe, but becauſe he thinks ſo.

Will your Lordſhip tell him he is inſincere?

He can reply from *Propoſ.* VI. *That to aſſume to know the Hearts and Sincerity of Men, is Nonſenſe and Blaſphemy.*

Will your Lordſhip tell him that he ought to conform to a Church eſtabliſh'd by the Laws of the Land?

He can anſwer from *Propoſ.* VIII. that this very *Eſtabliſhment* is an Argument againſt Conformity, *For as Chriſt's Kingdom is not of this World, ſo when Worldly-Encouragements are annexed to it, they are ſo many Deciſions againſt Chriſt, and his own expreſs Words.* And from *Propoſ.* VII. *That ſeeing Chriſt is ſole King and Lawgiver in his Kingdom, and no Man have any Power of Legiſlation in it, they who would be good Members of it, muſt ſhew themſelves Subjects to Chriſt alone, without any Regard to Man's Judgment.*

I am inclin'd to think, my Lord, that it is now *demonſtrated* to the common Senſe of the Laity, that your Lordſhip cannot urge any Argument, either from the *Truth*, the *Advantage*, or *Neceſſity* of embracing the Doctrines of the *Church* of *England*, to either *Jew*, *Heretick*, or *Schiſmatick*, but you have help'd him to a full Anſwer to any ſuch Argument, from your own Principles.

Are we, my Lord, to be treated as *Popiſhly* affected for aſſerting ſome Truths, which the Papiſts join with us in aſſerting? Is it a Crime in us not to drop ſome neceſſary Doctrines, becauſe the Papiſts have not dropt them? If *this* is to be popiſhly affected, we own the Charge, and are not for being ſuch *true Proteſtants*, as to give up the *Apoſtles Creed*, or lay aſide the Sacraments, becauſe they are receiv'd by the Church of *Rome*. I cannot indeed charge your Lordſhip with being *well affected* to the Church of *Rome* or of *England*,

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to the *Jews*, the *Quakers*, or *Socinians*, but this I have *demonſtrated*, and will undertake the Defence of it, that your Lordſhips *Principles* equally ſerve them all alike, and don't give the leaſt Advantage to one Church above another, as has ſufficiently appeared from your *Principles*.

I will no more ſay your Lordſhip is in the Intereſt of the *Quakers*, or *Socinians*, or *Papiſts*, than I would charge you with being in the Intereſt of the Church of *England*, for as your Doctrines equally ſupport them all, he ought to ask your Lordſhip's Pardon, who ſhould declare you more a Friend to one than the other.

I intended, my Lord, to have conſidered another very obnoxious Article in your Lordſhip's Doctrines, concerning the *Repugnancy of temporal Encouragements to the Nature of Chriſt's Kingdom*; but the Conſiſtency and Reaſonableneſs of guarding this Spiritual Kingdom with human Laws, has been defended with ſo much Perſpicuity and Strength of Argument, and your Lordſhip's Objections ſo fully confuted by the judicious and learned Dean of *Chicheſter*, that I preſume this Part of the Controverſie is finally determined.

I hope, my Lord, that I have delivered nothing here, that needs any Excuſe or Apology to the Laity, that they will not be perſwaded, thro' any vain Pretence of Liberty, to make themſelves Parties againſt the firſt Principles of Chriſtianity; or imagine, that whilſt we contend for the poſitive Inſtitutions of the Goſpel,

the Neceſſity of Church-Communion, or the Excellency of our own, we are robbing them of their natural Rights, or interfering with their Privileges. Whilſt we appear in the Defence of any part of Chriſtianity, we are engag'd for them in the common Cauſe of Chriſtians, and I am perſwaded better things of the Laity, than to believe that ſuch Labours will render either our Perſons or Profeſſions hateful to them. Your Lordſhip has indeed endeavoured to give an invidious Turn to the Controverſie, by calling upon the Laity to aſſert their Libertys, as if they were in Danger from the Principles of Chriſtianity. —But, my Lord, what Liberty does any Layman loſe, by our aſſerting, that *Church-Communion* is neceſſary? What Privilege is taken from them by our teaching the Danger of certain Ways and Methods of Religion? Is a Man made a Slave becauſe he is caution'd againſt the Principles of the *Quakers*, againſt *Fanaticiſm*, *Popery*, or *Socinianiſm*? Is he in a State of Bondage, becauſe the Sacraments are neceſſary, and none but Epiſcopal Clergy ought to adminiſter them? Is his Freedom deſtroy'd becauſe there is a particular Order of Men appointed by God to miniſter in Holy Things, and be ſerviceable to him in recommending him to the Favour of God? Can any Perſons, my Lord, think theſe things breaches upon their Liberty, except ſuch as think the Commandments a Burden? Is there any more Hardſhip in ſaying, thou ſhalt keep to an Epiſcopal Church, than thou ſhalt be baptiz'd? Or in requiring People to receive particular Sacraments, than to believe particular

Books

Books of Scripture to be the Word of God? If ſome other Advocate for the Laity, ſhould, out of Zeal for their Rights, declare that they need not believe one half of the Articles in the Creed; if they would but aſſert their Liberty, He would be as true a Friend, and deſerve the ſame Applauſe, as he who ſhould aſſert the Neceſſity of Church-Communion, is inconſiſtent with the natural Rights and Liberties of Mankind.

*I am,*

My LORD,

*Your Lordſhip's moſt*

*Humble Servant,*

**William Law.**

# POSTSCRIPT.

I Hope your Lordſhip will not think it Unnatural or Impertinent, to offer here a word or two in anſwer to ſome Objections againſt my former Letter.

To begin with the Doctrine of the uninterrupted Succeſſion of the Clergy.

I have, as I think, prov'd that there is a Divine Commiſſion requir'd to qualifie any one to exerciſe the Prieſtly Office, and that ſeeing this Divine Commiſſion can only be had from ſuch particular Perſons as God has appointed to give it, therefore it is neceſſary that there ſhould be a continual Succeſſion of ſuch Perſons, in order to keep up a Commiſſion'd Order of the Clergy. For if the Commiſſion it ſelf be to deſcend thro' Ages; and diſtinguiſh the Clergy from the Laity; it is certain the Perſons who alone can give this Commiſſion, muſt deſcend thro' the ſame Ages, and Conſequently an uninterrupted Succeſſion is as neceſſary, as that the Clergy have a Divine Commiſſion. Take away this Succeſſion, and the Clergy may as well be Ordain'd by one Perſon as another; a Number of Women may as well give them a Divine Commiſſion, as a Congregation of any Men, they may indeed appoint Perſons to Officiate in Holy Orders, for the ſake of *Decency* and

and *Order*; but then there is no more in it, than an external *Decency* and *Order*, they are no more the Prieſts of God, then thoſe that pretended to make them ſo. If we had loſt the Scriptures, it would be very well to make as good Books as we could, and come as near them as poſſible; but then it would be not only Folly, but Preſumption, to call them the Word of God. But I proceed to the Objections againſt the Doctrine of an uninterrupted Succeſſion.

*Firſt*, It is ſaid, that there is no mention made of it in Scripture, as having any relation to the being of a Church.

*Secondly*, That it is ſubject to ſo great Uncertainty, that if it be neceſſary, we can't now be ſure we are in the Church.

*Thirdly*, That it is a Popiſh Doctrine, and gives them great Advantage over us.

I begin with the 1ſt Objection, that there is no mention made of it in the Scriptures, which tho' I think I have ſufficiently anſwer'd in this Letter, I ſhall here farther conſider.

Pray, my Lord, is it not a true Doctrine, that *the Scriptures contain all things neceſſary to Salvation*? But, my Lord, it is no where expreſly ſaid, that *the Scriptures contain all things neceſſary to Salvation*. It is no where ſaid, that no other Articles of Faith need be believed. Where does it appear in Scripture, that the Scriptures were writ by any Di-

vine

vine Command? Have any of the Goſpels or Epiſtles this Authority to recommend them? Are they neceſſary to be believ'd, becauſe there is any Law of Chriſt concerning the Neceſſity of believing them?

May I reject this uninterrupted Succeſſion, becauſe it is not mention'd in Scripture? And may I not as well reject all the Goſpels? Produce your Authority, my Lord, mention your Texts of Scripture, where Chriſt has *hung the Salvation of Men* upon their believing, that St. *Matthew* or St. *John* wrote ſuch a Book ſeventeen Hundred Years ago. Theſe, my Lord, are *Niceties* and *Trifles* which are not to be found in Scripture, and conſequently have nothing to do with the Salvation of Men.

Now if nothing be to be held as neceſſary, but what is expreſly requir'd in ſo many Words in Scripture, then it can never be prov'd that the Scriptures themſelves are a *ſtanding Rule of Faith in all Ages*, ſince it is no where expreſly aſſerted, nor is it any where ſaid, that the Scriptures ſhould be continued as a Rule of Faith in all Ages. Is it an Objection againſt the Neceſſity of a perpetual Succeſſion of the Clergy, that it is not mention'd in the Scripture? And is it not as good a one againſt the *Neceſſity* of making Scripture the *ſtanding Rule of Faith in all Ages*, ſince it is never ſaid, that they were to be continu'd as a ſtanding Rule in all Ages? If things are only neceſſary for being ſaid to be ſo in Scripture, then all that are not thus taught are equally unneceſſary, and conſe-

conſequently it is no more neceſſary that the Scripture ſhould be a fix'd Rule of Faith in all Ages, than that there ſhould be Biſhops to ordain in all Ages.

Again, where ſhall we find it in Scripture, that the Sacraments are to be continued in every Age of the Church? Where is it ſaid, that they ſhall always be the ordinary Means of Grace neceſſary to be obſerv'd? Is there any Law of Chriſt, any Text of Scripture, that expreſly aſſerts, that if we leave the Uſe of the Sacraments, we are out of Covenant with God? Is it any where directly ſaid, that we muſt never lay them aſide, or that they will be *perpetually* neceſſary? No, my Lord, this is a *Nicety* and *Trifle* not to be *found in Scripture: There is no Streſs laid there upon this Matter,* but upon things *of a quite different Nature.*

I now preſume, my Lord, that every one who has common Senſe plainly ſees, that if this Succeſſion of the Clergy be to be deſpis'd, becauſe it is not expreſly requir'd in Scripture; it undeniably follows, that we may reject the Scriptures, as not being a *ſtanding Rule of Faith in all Ages;* we may diſuſe the Sacraments, as not the *Ordinary Means of Grace in all Ages*; ſince this is no more mentioned in the Scriptures, or *expreſly* requir'd, than this uninterrupted Succeſſion.

If it be a good Argument againſt the Neceſſity of Epiſcopal Ordainers, that it is never ſaid in Scripture, that there ſhall *always* be ſuch Ordainers;

it is certainly as concluſive againſt the Uſe of the Sacraments in every Age, that it is no where ſaid in Scripture they ſhall be uſed in *All Ages*.

If no Government or Order of the Clergy be to be held as neceſſary, becauſe no ſuch Neceſſity is aſſerted in Scripture; it is certain this concludes as ſtrongly againſt *Government*, and *the Order it ſelf*, as againſt any *Particular* Order. For it is no more ſaid in Scripture, that there ſhall be an Order of Clergy, than that there ſhall be any *particular* Order; therefore if this Silence proves againſt any *particular* Order of Clergy, it proves as much againſt *Order it ſelf*.

Should therefore any of your Lordſhip's Friends have ſo much Church-Zeal as to contend for the Neceſſity of *ſome Order*, tho' of no particular Order; he muſt fall under your Lordſhip's Diſpleaſure, and be prov'd as meer a *Dreamer* and *Trifler*, as thoſe who aſſert the Neceſſity of Epiſcopal Ordination. For if it be plain, that there need be no *Epiſcopal Clergy*, becauſe it is not ſaid there ſhall *always* be Epiſcopal Clergy; it is undeniably plain, that there need be *no Order* of the Clergy, ſince it is no where ſaid, there ſhall be *an Order* of Clergy: Therefore whoever ſhall contend for an Order of Clergy, will be as much condemn'd by your Lordſhip's Doctrine, as he that declares for the Epiſcopal Clergy.

The Truth of the Matter is this, If nothing is to be eſteemed of any Moment, but counted as

mere

mere *Trifle* and *Nicety* among Chriſtians, which is not *expreſly* requir'd in the Scriptures; then it is a *Trifle* and *Nicety*, whether we believe the Scripture to be a *ſtanding Rule of Faith* in all Ages, whether we uſe the Sacraments in *all Ages*, whether we have any Clergy at all, whether we obſerve the Lord's Day, whether we baptize our Children, or whether we go to publick Worſhip; for none of theſe things are expreſly required in ſo many Words in Scripture. But if your Lordſhip, with the reſt of the Chriſtian World, will take theſe things to be of Moment, and well prov'd, becauſe they are founded in Scripture, tho' not in *expreſs Terms*, or under *plain Commands*; if you will acknowledge theſe Matters to be well aſſerted, becauſe they may be gather'd from Scripture, and are confirm'd by the univerſal Practice of the Church in all Ages, (which is all the Proof that they are capable of) I don't doubt but it will appear, that this *ſucceſſive Order of the Clergy* is founded on the ſame Evidence, and ſupported by as great Authority, ſo that it muſt be thought of the ſame Moment with theſe things, by all unprejudic'd Perſons.

For, my Lord, tho' it be not expreſly ſaid, that there ſhall *always* be a *Succeſſion of Epiſcopal Clergy*, yet it is a Truth founded in Scripture it ſelf, and aſſerted by the univerſal Voice of Tradition in the firſt and ſucceeding Ages of the Church.

It is thus founded in Scripture: There we are taught that, the Prieſthood is a *Poſitive Inſtitution*; that no Man can take this Office unto himſelf;

that neither our Saviour himſelf, nor his Apoſtles, nor any other Perſon, however extraordinarily endow'd with Gifts from God, could, *as ſuch*, exerciſe the Prieſtly Office, till they had God's expreſs Commiſſion for that purpoſe. Now how does it appear, that the Sacraments are Poſitive Inſtitutions, but that they are conſecrated to ſuch Ends and Effects, as of themſelves they were no way qualify'd to perform? Now as it appears from Scripture, that Men, *as ſuch*, however endow'd, were not qualify'd to take this Office upon them without God's Appointment; it is demonſtratively certain, that Men ſo call'd are as much to be eſteem'd a *Poſitive Inſtitution*, as Elements ſo choſen can be call'd a *Poſitive Inſtitution*. All the Perſonal Abilities of Men conferring no more Authority to exerciſe the Office of a Clergy-Man, than the natural Qualities of Water to make a Sacrament: So that the one Inſtitution is as truly Poſitive as the other.

Again. The Order of the Clergy is not only a *Poſitive* Order inſtituted by God, but the different Degrees in this Order is of the ſame Nature. For we find in Scripture, that ſome Perſons could perform ſome Offices in the Prieſthood, which neither Deacons nor Prieſts could do, tho' thoſe Deacons and Prieſts were inſpir'd Perſons, and Workers of Miracles. Thus *Timothy* was ſent to ordain Elders, becauſe none below his Order, who was a Biſhop, could perform that Office. *Peter* and *John* laid their Hands on baptiz'd Perſons, becauſe neither Prieſts nor Deacons, tho' Workers

Workers of Miracles, could execute that Part of the Sacerdotal Office.

Now can we imagine that the Apoſtles and Biſhops thus diſtinguiſh'd themſelves for nothing? That there was the ſame Power in *Deacons* and *Prieſts* to execute thoſe Offices, tho' they took them to themſelves? No, my Lord; if three Degrees in the Miniſtry are inſtituted in Scripture, we are oblig'd to think them as truly diſtinct in their Powers, as we are to think that the Prieſthood it ſelf contains Powers that are diſtinct from thoſe of the Laity. It is no more conſiſtent with Scripture, to ſay that *Deacons* or *Prieſts* may ordain, than that the Laity are Prieſts or Deacons. The ſame Divine Inſtitution making as truly a Difference betwixt the Clergy, as it does betwixt Clergy and Laity.

Now if the Order of the Clergy be a *Divine Poſitive* Inſtitution, in which there are different Degrees of Power, where ſome alone can Ordain, *&c.* whilſt others can only perform other parts of the ſacred Office; if this (as it plainly appears) be a Doctrine of Scripture, then it is a Doctrine of Scripture, that there is a Neceſſity of ſuch a Succeſſion of Men as have Power to ordain. For do the Scriptures make it neceſſary that *Timothy* (or ſome Biſhop) ſhould be ſent to *Epheſus* to ordain Prieſts, becauſe the Prieſts who were there could not ordain? And do not the ſame Scriptures make it as neceſſary, that *Timothy*'s Succeſſor be the only Ordainer, as well as He was in his Time? Will not Prieſts in the next

next Age be as deſtitute of the Power of Ordaining, as when *Timothy* was alive? So that ſince the Scriptures teach, that *Timothy*, or Perſons of his Order, could *alone* ordain in that Age; they as plainly teach, that the Succeſſors of that Order can *alone* ordain in any Age, and conſequently the Scriptures plainly teach a Neceſſity of an *Epiſcopal Succeſſion*.

The Scriptures declare there is a Neceſſity of a Divine Commiſſion to execute the Office of a Prieſt; they alſo teach, that this Commiſſion can only be had from particular Perſons: Therefore the Scriptures plainly teach, there is a Neceſſity of a *Succeſſion of ſuch Particular Perſons*, in order to keep up a truly *Commiſſion'd Clergy*.

Suppoſe when *Timothy* was ſent to *Epheſus* to ordain Elders, the Church had told him, We have choſe Elders already, and laid our Hands upon them: That if he alone was allowed to exerciſe this Power, it might ſeem as if he alone had it; or that Miniſters were the better for being ordain'd by his particular Hands; and that ſome Perſons might imagine they could have no Clergy, except they were ordain'd by him, or ſome of his Order; and that ſeeing Chriſt had no where made an expreſs Law, that ſuch Perſons ſhould be neceſſary to the Ordination of the Clergy; therefore they rejected this Authority of *Timothy*, leſt they ſhould ſubject themſelves to *Niceties* and *Trifles*.

Will

Will your Lordſhip ſay, that ſuch a Practice would have been allow'd of in the *Epheſians*? Or that Miniſters ſo ordained, would have been receiv'd as the Miniſters of Chriſt? If not, why muſt ſuch Practice or ſuch Miniſters be allow'd of in any after-Ages? Would not the ſame Proceeding againſt any of *Timothy's Succeſſors*, have deſerv'd the ſame Cenſure, as being equally unlawful. If therefore the Scripture condemns all Ordination but what is Epiſcopal; the Scriptures make a *Succeſſion* of *Epiſcopal Ordainers* neceſſary. So that I hope, my Lord, we ſhall be no more told that this is a Doctrine not mention'd in Scripture, or without any Foundation in it.

The great Objection to this Doctrine is, that this *Epiſcopal Order of the Clergy*, is only an Apoſtolical Practice; and ſeeing *all* Apoſtolical Practices are not binding to us, ſure this need not.

In anſwer to this, my Lord, I ſhall firſt ſhew, that tho' all Apoſtolical Practices are not neceſſary, yet ſome may be neceſſary. *Secondly*, That the Divine unalterable Right of Epiſcopacy is not founded *merely* on Apoſtolical Practice.

To begin with the *Firſt*; The Objection runs thus, *All Apoſtolical Practices, are not unalterable or obligatory to us, therefore no Apoſtolical Practices are.* This, my Lord, is juſt as Theological, as if I ſhould ſay all Scripture-Truths are not Articles of Faith, or Fundamentals of Religion, therefore no Scripture-Truths are: Is not the Argument full

ifference
and others
-Truths
important
must all Pri
were Apoſto
either divine
of Faith, from
different Matter
aſſiſt us in diſtingui-
ices are of perpetual
. But it is a ſtrange
ſome People are fallen
nothing of *Moderation*,
of one Extream into
ſuch Thing as a middle
as *Moderation*. Thus
have an *abſolute uncontrol-*
at all; we muſt either hold
ices neceſſary, or *none at all*.

Apoſtolical *Practices* can be unal-
are not, then no Apoſtolical
to be taught in all Ages,
ical *Doctrines* are not; and we
ght to teach the *Death, Satiſ-*
of Jeſus Chriſt, than we
the *eating of Blood and Things*
muſt thus blindly follow them
ces, or elſe be at liberty to leave
muſt for the ſame Reaſon im-
*Doctrines*, or elſe have a
g from them all.

For

For if there be any Thing in the Nature of *Doctrines*, in the *Tenour* of Scripture, or the *Senſe* of Antiquity, whereby we can know the difference of ſome *Doctrines* from others, that ſome were *Occaſional Temporary* Determinations, ſuited to particular States and Conditions in the Church, whilſt others were ſuch general *Doctrines* as would concern the Church in all States and Circumſtances; If there can be this difference betwixt Apoſtolical *Doctrines*, there muſt neceſſarily be the ſame difference betwixt Apoſtolical *Practices*, unleſs we will ſay, that their *Practices* were not ſuited to their *Doctrines*. For Occaſional *Doctrines* muſt produce Occaſional *Practices*.

Now may not we be oblig'd by ſome *Practices* of the Apoſtles, where the Nature of the Thing, and the Conſent of Antiquity ſhew it to be equally neceſſary and important in all Ages and Conditions of the Church, without being ty'd down to the ſtrict obſervance of every Thing which the Apoſtles did, tho' it plainly appears, that it was done upon *accidental* and *mutable* Reaſons. Can we not be oblig'd to obſerve the *Lord's Day* from Apoſtolical *Practice*, without being equally oblig'd to *Lock the Doors* where we are met, becauſe in the Apoſtles Times they lock'd them for fear of their Enemies.

My Lord, we are to follow the *Practices* of the Apoſtles, as we ought to follow every Thing elſe, with *Diſcretion* and *Judgment*, and not run

[illegible] into every Thing they did, becauſe they were Apoſtles, or yet think that becauſe we need not practiſe after them in every Thing, we need do it in nothing. We beſt imitate them, when we act upon ſuch Reaſons as they acted upon, and neither make their *Occaſional* Practices *perpetual* Laws, nor break thro' ſuch General Rules, as will always have the *ſame reaſon* to be obſerv'd.

If it be ask'd, how we can know what Practices muſt be obſerv'd, and what may be laid aſide? I anſwer, as we know *Articles* of Faith from *leſſer Truths*; as we know *Occaſional* Doctrines from Perpetual Doctrines; that is, from the *Nature* of the Things, from the *Tenour* of Scripture, and the *Teſtimony of* Antiquity.

*Secondly*, It is not true, that the *Divine unalterable Right* of Epiſcopacy is founded *merely* upon Apoſtolical Practice.

We do not ſay that Epiſcopacy cannot be changed, *merely* becauſe we have Apoſtolical Practice for it; but becauſe ſuch is the Nature of the Chriſtian Prieſthood, that it can only be continued in that Method, which God has appointed for its Continuance. Thus, Epiſcopacy is the *only* inſtituted Method of continuing the Prieſthood; therefore Epiſcopacy is *unchangeable*, not becauſe it is an Apoſtolical Practice, but becauſe the Nature of the Thing requires it: A poſitive Inſtitution being only to be continued

tinued in that Method which God has appointed; ſo that it is the Nature of the Prieſthood, and not the Apoſtolical Practice alone, that makes it neceſſary to be continued. The Apoſtolical Practice indeed ſhews, that Epiſcopacy is the Order that is appointed, but it is the Nature of the Prieſthood that aſſures us that it is *Unalterable*: And that becauſe an Office which is of no ſignificancy, but as it is of Divine Appointment, and inſtituted by God, can no otherways be continued, but in that way of Continuance which God has appointed.

The Argument proceeds thus; The Chriſtian Prieſthood is a Divine poſitive Inſtitution, which as it could only begin by the *Divine Appointment*, ſo it can only deſcend to after Ages in ſuch a Method as God has been pleaſed to appoint.

The Apoſtles (and your Lordſhip owns, Chriſt was in *all* that they did)* inſtituted Epiſcopacy *alone*, therefore this Method of Epiſcopacy is unalterable, not becauſe an *Apoſtolical Practice* cannot be laid aſide, but becauſe the Prieſthood can only deſcend to after-Ages in ſuch a Method as is of Divine Appointment.

So that the Queſtion is not fairly ſtated, when it is asked, whether Epiſcopacy, being an Apoſtolical Practice, may be laid aſide? But it ſhould be asked, whether an inſtituted particular Method of continuing the Prieſthood be not neceſſary to be continued? Whether an appointed



* *Anſwer to Dr.* Snape.

Order of receiving a Commiſſion from God be not neceſſary to be obſerv'd, in order to receive a Commiſſion from Him? If the Caſe was thus ſtated, as it ought to be fairly ſtated, any one would ſoon perceive, that we can no more lay aſide Epiſcopacy, and yet continue the Chriſtian Prieſthood, than we can alter the Terms of Salvation, and yet be in Covenant with God.

I come now, my Lord, to the Second Objection, *That this uninterrupted Succeſſion is ſubject to ſo great uncertainty, that if it be neceſſary, we can never ſay that we are in the Church.*

I know no Reaſon, my Lord, why it is ſo uncertain, but becauſe it is founded upon *Hiſtorical Evidence.* Let it therefore be conſidered, my Lord, that Chriſtianity it ſelf, is a *Matter of Fact*, only convey'd to us by *Hiſtorical Evidence.*

That the *Canon of Scripture* is only made known to us by *Hiſtorical Evidence*; that we have no other way of knowing what Writings are the word of God; and yet the Truth of our Faith, and every other Means of Grace depends upon our Knowledge and Belief of the Scriptures. Muſt we not declare the Neceſſity of this Succeſſion of Biſhops, becauſe it can only be prov'd by *Hiſtorical Evidence*, and that for ſuch a long tract of Time?

Why then do we declare the belief of the Scriptures, neceſſary to Salvation? Is not this equally

equally putting the Salvation of Men upon a *Matter of Fact*, ſupported only by *Hiſtorical Evidence*, and making it depend upon Things done ſeventeen hundred Years ago? Cannot *Hiſtorical Evidence* ſatisfie us in one Point, as well as in the other? Is there any Thing in the Nature of this Succeſſion, that it can't be as well aſſerted by *Hiſtorical Evidence*, as the Truth of the Scriptures? Is there not the ſame bare poſſibility in the Thing it ſelf, that the Scriptures may in ſome important Points be corrupted, as that this Succeſſion may be broke? But is this any juſt Reaſon why we ſhould believe, or fear, that the Scriptures are corrupted, becauſe there is a Phyſical Poſſibility of it, tho' there is all the Proof that can be requir'd of the contrary? Why then muſt we ſet aſide the Neceſſity of this Succeſſion from a *bare poſſibility of* Error, tho' there is all the Proof that can be requir'd, that it never was broken, but ſtrictly kept up?

And tho' your Lordſhip has told the World ſo much of the *Improbability*, *Nonſenſe*, and *Abſurdity* of this Succeſſion, yet I promiſe your Lordſhip an Anſwer when ever you ſhall think fit to ſhew, *when*, or *how*, or *where* this Succeſſion broke, or *ſeem'd* to break, or was *likely* to break.

And till then, I ſhall content my ſelf with offering this Reaſon to your Lordſhip, why it is *morally impoſſible*, it ever ſhould have broken in all that Term of Years, from the Apoſtles to the preſent Times.

The

The Reaſon is this; it has been a receiv'd Doctrine in every Age of the Church, that no Ordination was valid but that of Biſhops: This Doctrine, my Lord, has been a conſtant Guard upon the *Epiſcopal Succeſſion*; for ſeeing it was univerſally believ'd that Biſhops *alone* could Ordain, it was *morally impoſſible*, that any Perſons could be receiv'd as Biſhops, who had not been ſo Ordain'd.

Now is it not *morally impoſſible*, that in our Church any one ſhould be made a Biſhop without *Epiſcopal Ordination*? Is there any poſſibility of forging Orders, or ſtealing a Biſhoprick by any other Stratagem? No, it is *morally impoſſible*, becauſe it is an acknowledg'd Doctrine amongſt us, that a Biſhop can only be ordain'd by Biſhops? Now as this Doctrine muſt neceſſarily prevent any one being a Biſhop without *Epiſcopal Ordination* in our Age, ſo it muſt have the ſame effect in every other Age as well as ours; and conſequently it is as reaſonable to believe that the Succeſſion of Biſhops was not broke in any Age ſince the Apoſtles, as that it was not broke in our own Kingdom within theſe forty Years. For the ſame Doctrine which preſerves it forty Years, may as well preſerve it forty hundred Years, if it was equally believ'd in all that ſpace of Time. That this has been the conſtant Doctrine of the Church, I preſume your Lordſhip will not deny; I have not here enter'd into the Hiſtorical Defence of it, this, and indeed every other Inſtitution of the Chriſtian Church

having

having been lately ſo well defended from the Eccleſiaſtical Records by a very excellent and judicious Writer. *

We believe the Scriptures are not corrupted, becauſe it was always a received Doctrine in the Church, that they were the *ſtanding Rule of Faith*, and becauſe the Providence of God may well be ſuppos'd to preſerve ſuch Books, as were to convey to every Age the Means of Salvation. The ſame Reaſons prove the great improbability that this Succeſſion ſhould ever be broke, both becauſe it was always againſt a receiv'd Doctrine to break it, and becauſe we may juſtly hope the Providence of God would keep up his own Inſtitution.

I muſt here obſerve, that tho' your Lordſhip often expoſes the Impoſſibility of this Succeſſion, yet at other times, even you your ſelf, and your Advocates aſſert it. Thus you tell us, *That the Papiſts have one regular Appointment or uninterrupted Succeſſion of Biſhops undefil'd with the touch of Lay-hands.* †

Is this Succeſſion then ſuch an *improbable, impoſſible* Thing, and yet can your Lordſhip aſſure us that it is at *Rome*; that tho' it be ſeventeen hundred Years old there, yet that it is a true one? Is it ſuch *Abſurdity*, and *Nonſence*, and every Thing that is *Ridiculous* when we lay claim to it

* *Original Draught of the Primitive Church.*
† *Preſerv. p.* 80.

it; and yet can your Lordſhip aſſure us that it is not only poſſible to be, but *actually* is in being in the Church of *Rome*? What Arguments, or Authority can your Lordſhip produce to ſhew that there is a Succeſſion there, that will not equally prove it to be here?

You aſſert expreſly, that there is a *true Succeſſion* there; you deny that we have it here; therefore your Lordſhip muſt mean, that we had not Epiſcopal Ordination when we ſeparated from the Church of *Rome*. And here the Controverſie muſt reſt betwixt you and your Adverſaries, *whether we had Epiſcopal Ordination then*; for as your Lordſhip has expreſly affirm'd, that there is this uninterrupted Succeſſion in the Church of *Rome*, it is impoſſible that we ſhould want it, unleſs we had not Epiſcopal Ordination at the *Reformation*.

Whenever your Lordſhip ſhall pleaſe to appear in Defence of the *Nagg's-head Story*, or any other Pretence againſt our Epiſcopal Ordination when we departed for *Rome*, we ſhall beg leave to ſhew our ſelves ſo far true Proteſtants, as to anſwer any *Popiſh* Arguments your Lordſhip can produce.

Here let the *Common Senſe* of the Laity be once more appeal'd to: Your Lordſhip tells them that an *uninterrupted Succeſſion* is improbable, abſurd, and, *morally* ſpeaking, *impoſſible*, and, for this Reaſon, they need not trouble their Heads about it; yet in another Place you poſitively affirm, that this true

true *uninterrupted Succeſſion* is actually in the Church of *Rome:* That is, they are to deſpiſe this Succeſſion, becauſe it never was, or ever can be, yet are to believe that it *really* is in the *Romiſh* Church. My Lord, this comes very near *ſaying* and *unſaying, to the great Diverſion of the Papiſts.* Muſt they not not laugh at your Lordſhip's *Proteſtant Zeal,* which might be much better call'd the *Spirit* of Popery? Muſt they not be highly pleas'd with all your Banter and Ridicule upon an *uninterrupted Succeſſion,* when they ſee you ſo kindly except theirs? And think it only *Nonſenſe* and *Abſurdity,* when claim'd by any other Church? Surely, my Lord, they muſt conceive great Hopes of your Lordſhip, ſince you have here rather choſe to contradict your ſelf, than not vouch for their Succeſſion: For you have ſaid it is morally impoſſible, yet affirm that it is with them.

The third Objection againſt this *uninterrupted Succeſſion,* is this, that it is a *Popiſh Doctrine,* and *gives Papiſts advantage over us.*

The Objection proceeds thus, we muſt not aſſert the Neceſſity of this Succeſſion, becauſe the Papiſts ſay it is only to be found with them. I might add, becauſe ſome mighty zealous Proteſtants ſay ſo too.

But if this be good Argumentation, we ought not to tell the *Jews,* or *Deiſts,* &c. that there is any Neceſſity of embracing Chriſtianity, becauſe the *Papiſts* ſay Chriſtians can only be ſaved in their Church.